

1976

## Riverfront: the humanist speaks

Harvey Leavitt

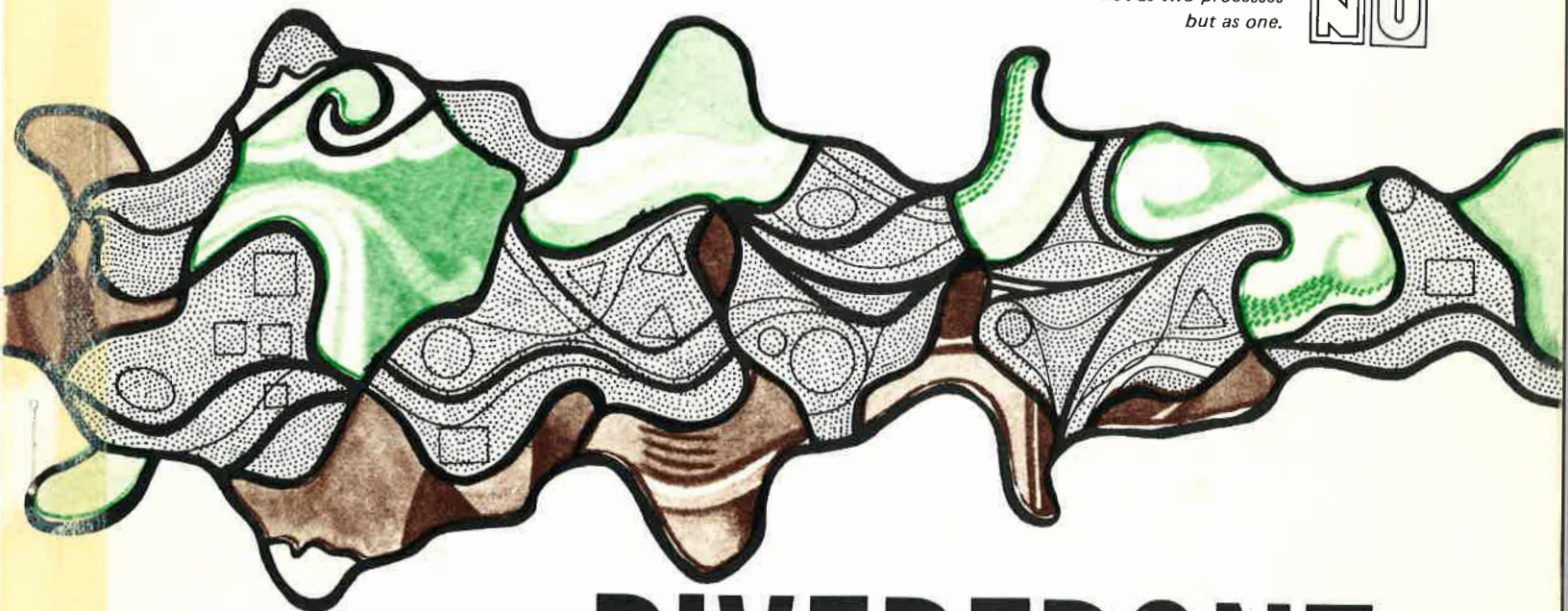
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

Riverfront Development Program

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*to earn a living  
and live a cultured life,  
not as two processes  
but as one.*



# RIVERFRONT:

the humanist speaks

edited by  
harvey leavitt

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larry bradshaw

RIVERFRONT: THE HUMANIST SPEAKS

Editor  
Harvey Leavitt

Graphics  
Lawrence Bradshaw

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA  
1976

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## FOREWORD

On September 14, 1973, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency adopted the formal goal of the Riverfront Development Program. Their stated goal is:

To achieve the highest quality of life for present and future residents of the region through rational economic, social and physical development in harmony with the human and natural environment.

This Riverfront Development Program goal is an overall statement reflecting the more specific Regional Goals for Environmental concerns, open space and recreation, housing, transportation, human resources, community facilities and services, Development policies and implementation as adopted by the MAPA Council of Officials March 8, 1973.

From the general goals emerged discrete areas of investigation which were then assigned to task forces made up of interested citizens. More than 600 citizens participated in the task force planning, and they in turn worked with professional consultants. What emerged from this process was a series of published reports, plans, and recommendations.

The published plans became a catalyst for public discussion, and in some instances, the implementation of plans became a focal point for discussion. It was at this juncture that the Forum series was proposed and then funded.

On a series of Tuesday and Thursday evenings during the months of September, October and November of 1975, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, as a result of a matching grant from The Nebraska Committee for the Humanities, and contributions from area firms and individuals, sponsored eight Forums on the regional Riverfront Development Program.

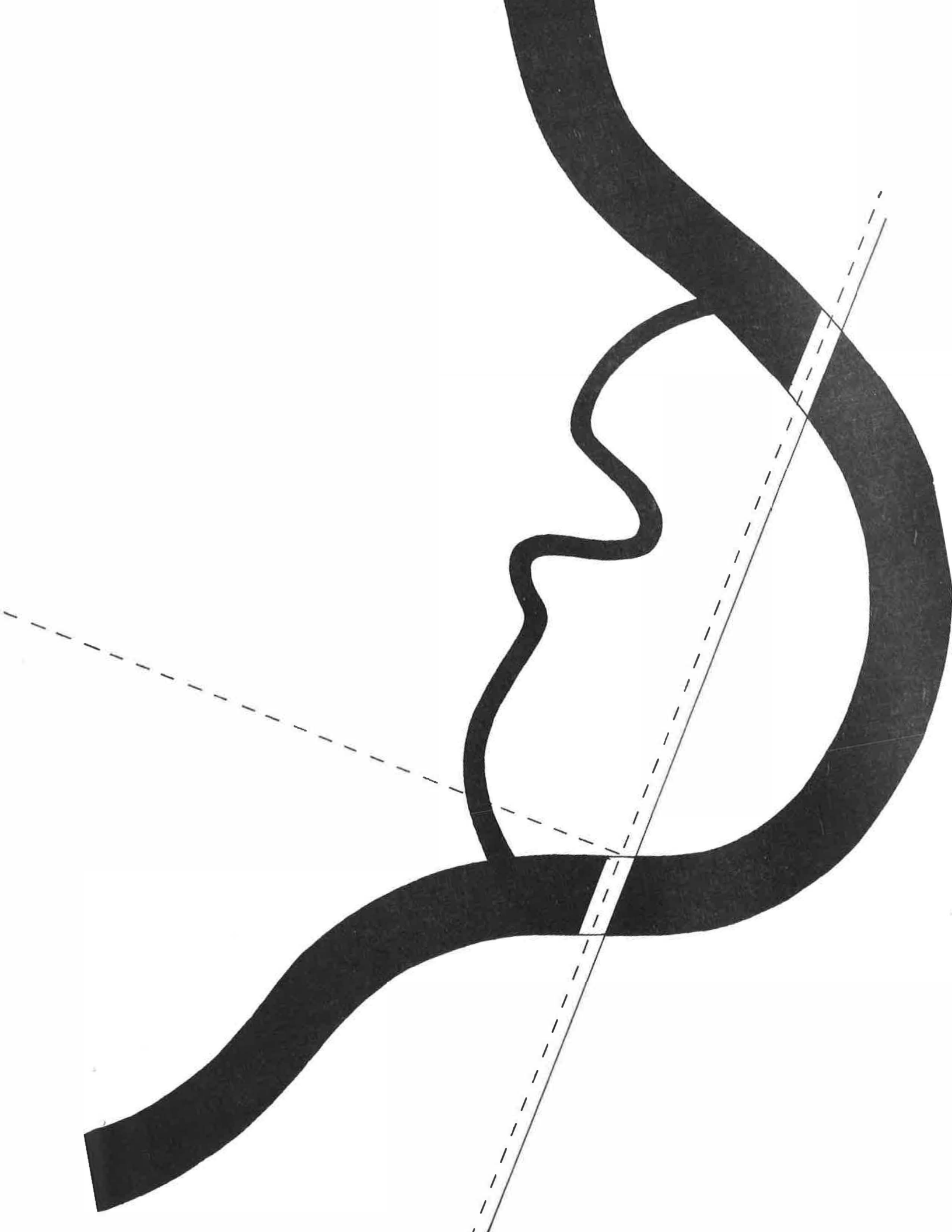
The Riverfront Development Program has been widely commented on in the region, but because of its scope and complexity, the public understanding has often been limited to the most highly visible issues. The Forum series was created in an effort to hurdle the informational and interpretive gap between those intimately involved in Riverfront planning and the public at large. Guest speakers, the majority of whom were from the immediate area, and who are professional humanists or social scientists with a humanistic perspective as a major touchstone in their discipline, keynoted each Forum. Citizen panelists were then called upon to react to the major speeches, and finally the audience was invited to participate. Three presentations in the Forum series were made by persons from outside the region. Larry Morrison, James Goodell and Martha Padve of Wilsey-Ham Associates, the consultants to the Riverfront Development Program on aesthetic planning, led off the Forum series with a presentation of their findings and recommendations. A summary of their full report to MAPA is their segment of the text of this book. George Nelson, an honored designer and author, was the keynote speaker for the entire Forum series, and Harold Baxter, a planner with Lawrence Halprin and Associates, the San Francisco Planning Firm with major overall responsibility for the downtown Omaha Mall, was the final speaker.

All speakers were free to discuss the Riverfront Program in any way they chose. The common denominator which emerged was the perception that the Riverfront Program was vital and necessary to the region, but there was a wide variety of views on just how it should take place, on the priorities, and

the balance between new constructs and restoration of the old. Additionally there were those who endorsed the planning process and those who believed it could have been much better, particularly as it made the citizens' voices and needs heard. And finally there were the expected differences on what are the essential human needs and results sought from the Riverfront Program.

In my introduction I have focused on the perceptions of the "outside" speakers, not because the local speakers lacked unique and useful perspectives, but because the outside consultants seemed to speak with a single voice, and with a perspective that seemed to cast the humanistic tradition in sharp relief. Our local speakers speak very well to their individual concerns.

Harvey Leavitt  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
December, 1975



## INTRODUCTION

Cities and regions, like individuals, periodically seek renewal, and that renewal may take any number of forms. Like the individual, the first step for a region is usually a period of introspection, a time for evaluation, a time to crystallize new thoughts and courses of action, as well as a time to contemplate the implications of those thoughts and actions on the people who will inhabit the region within the newly conceived future.

Riverfront development planning, for the greater Omaha metropolitan area and Riverfront counties, has been a continuous organized process for the past three years. It has been a period of intense activity, albeit by too few members of the community. Nevertheless, there has been an intensive self-examination of the region, and as a result, we have come to know the area and its people far more intimately than perhaps at any time in our region's history. And if we haven't arrived at a concensus, we certainly have the most complete catalog of human need and desire ever compiled for the region. The Riverfront planning process has been a virtual Rorschach test of the human imagination, in all its various forms over the region, and as a result we have not one riverfront, but a whole series of riverfronts which inhabit the imaginations of the residents.

In many ways the period of introspection and the attempts to seek concensus are really attempts by people to discover what's in it for them. The planning



process has tended to focus on material objectives in many instances, and if not material, then it focused on the means by which people may acquire the materials and services for what is presumed to be the good life.

Because we perceive ourselves and our goals within a temporal framework, which generally confines our interest to that of our own and our childrens' life-spans, the planning and theorizing about the future tend to be dominated by concerns of speed. "Let us get on with the work of riverfront", was echoed and re-echoed at each forum event. The pressures to demonstrate, in concrete tangibles, the effectiveness of the planning process, was exerted nightly by members of our audiences. Riverfront progress seemed to become a race with one's own mortality, and too little was said of the salutary effect of being a participant in a Utopian quest.

Just what are the effects of individual citizen participation in the planning for the future? In the first place we have discovered the conflicts between the expectations created by the planning process and our capacity to translate that into conclusive decisions. We nervously confront activities which will alter the physical shape and the socio-psychological ambience of our environment.

We have placed ourselves in a position in which we have the potentiality for confusing causes with effects. Let me illustrate that through a discussion of the superbloc concept which has been proposed for downtown Omaha. Superblock planning envisions a modernistic, multiple use, construct which will become the focal point for downtown Omaha retailing activity. It envisions relatively low-rise shopping punctuated with high-rise hotel and office space, all

synthesized into a vibrant center of activity for the downtown.

The proponents of such a plan have described superblock in virtually messianic terms, and they ascribe to it a role of first cause. In effect they are saying that superblock will cause people to be downtown, that it will cause activity, and that it will help regenerate all that is old and in decay. Without making any judgments on the results of superblock, it is relatively easy to discern a reluctance on the part of the citizenry to fully endorse the scheme. And I suspect the reluctance stems not from any intrinsic dislike of the plan, but rather from a nagging discomfort. That discomfort seems to evolve from a sense of priority, a priority that substitutes causes for effects. If, in fact, that perception changes, and superblock is observed as an effect of the deeply felt needs of the metropolitan area, then we shall have observed a cause that pushes the planners into action rather than planners providing a pulling effect on the citizenry.

But to construe this as a criticism of the planning effort would be a misreading. If part of the planners' task is to ascertain the pulse of the community, then the community must have a discernible pulse. Fortunately or unfortunately, we have a plethora of pulse beats which present a cacaphony to those listeners in a decision-making role. As a result, decision making appears to be a task that the community must delegate to a few. And ultimately that is a test of the personal popularity, the acumen endowed upon the decision makers, and the community's perceptions of equity and selflessness in the decision making. Leadership remains a challenge to the Riverfront Development Project.

There was concern expressed by several of the contributors that any

realistic appraisal of citizen input might indicate a failure, and there is a tacit recognition of that in my remarks. But success and failure, when measured only on a standard of completed projects or consensus decision making, may be a misapplication of a success measuring instrument.

From the humanist's point of view, the quest for Utopia is often as meaningful as its completion, and in terms of human fulfillment, often times more meaningful. In our quest we have examined our historical antecedents and, in a way, recovered a part of ourselves. We have placed our contemporary existence within a temporal continuum, and we are discovering how the past informs the present and the future. For the humanist-historian that is a major success, and as he sees those interests translated into museums, and into redevelopment that is consistent with historical preservation and which provides the least discontinuity, he perceives an orderly, yet enlightened, way into the future. For those with aesthetic concern for the region, there is recognition that the planning process has inventoried the aesthetic heritage; and it has helped us to discover the aesthetic treasures which are a daily part of our experience and, as a result, have become virtually invisible. In particular, many of our architectural sensibilities have been reawakened, but we also have a new awareness of open space, of horizons, of nature trails and natural points of human interaction. And our archetypal memory with regard to water and all of its symbolic qualities of purification, rebirth, life, fertility, and its transcendent quality of hope, has emerged at the conscious level of experience. As a result of their heightened awareness, large numbers of people now seem to be more carefully examining

the social forces, as well as the man-made and natural environment, to discover the sources of aesthetic, social and psychological feelings of well-being. Thus, many more people have the capacity to deal in specifics with regard to their personal sense of well-being in the community.

There are a great many other legitimate concerns as we look ahead and attempt to outline the dimensions of our Utopia. These other concerns are not necessarily in conflict with our earlier perceptions of the contemporary society within the historical continuum or the rediscovery of aesthetic sensitivity. But they are the concerns of a great many of our citizens who perceive quality of life as good and decent housing, job opportunity, social and economic mobility, and a place of significance for the business community.

These broad concerns translate into a long list of social problems, priorities for the commitment of public and private monies, minority participation in the life and direction of the community, the relationship between the public and private sectors of the society, the nature of, or the absence of, economic, physical, and population growth for the region, the degree of trust in our institutions both private and public, and the choices made for initial projects which will set the symbolic tone for the Riverfront Development Project.

The lists of variables are as long as the individual human imaginations that come to play upon the community's needs and future direction.

In addition to the relatively narrow regional context of our planning, we are being made more and more aware of the national and global context in which our planning activity takes place. We live within a framework of national norms

and expectations at the same time we are becoming more conscious of the goals and aspirations of other nations and world regions. So, while we plan, we are acutely aware of international energy supplies, natural resources, food supplies, population pressures, our capacity to sustain the technological society to which we have accustomed ourselves, the ownership of land, water and other productive assets. Thus our plans are shaped and tempered by our expectations of a global culture as well as a regional future.

As a community we are too often victims of the first statement in the law of inertia: "Things in motion tend to stay in motion." That predelection about our technological age has served us well in the immediate past, but as events and knowledge about the present become available to us, we must be prepared for a change. Our technology has been gluttonous of energy and resources, and if only a portion of what some prognosticators see for the future holds true, we may have to alter our lives and expectations rather drastically. That may say more about the critic than the object of study, but the point is that the present state of abundance and wealth may not necessarily be the assumption for the future. The professional planners vary in their attitudes toward the future's technological orientation; but it is a lively issue that has not yet had the public discussion it deserves.

Let me illustrate the issue of technology through a brief discussion of housing. This is not intended to be a polemic, although it contains characteristics of such. It is intended to exemplify the creation of an optional mode from what some see as a settled assumption. The impact of technology and the

concept that all change brings progress has so imbued our culture that even our housing has been made a part of our throwaway world. There have been few incentives to build a house with a 100 year life expectancy in recent years because our view of temporal progress tells us that it will become obsolete in twenty-five years. Thus we invest valuable and irreplaceable resources in structures which have become an extension of so much else in our society that is disposable. If technology creates expectations that the future will hold amenities and conveniences thus far dreamed of, and if the contemporary house can't accomodate them, then let us not invest much in our present--that becomes a kind of implied plan for the future. As a result, we find ourselves with suburbs twenty years old that are nearly ready for the bulldozer, in a time when there are enormous national shortages of housing. We created the future twenty years ago when we made basic decisions on the type of construction and the life expectancy built into our structures. Short term economics may have blinded us to the ultimate economy of building durable structures with aesthetic qualities we wish to maintain as a permanent part of our physical environment. Beauty and durability may finally be the greatest economy. We need to ask about the effects of constructs with finite expectancies, and we need to ask what effects a temporary physical world has on our human existence. I have elaborated only slightly on one potentiality, and potentialities for criteria are endless. But if we more closely examine the ramifications of our acts on standards other than temporal progress and technology, we shall have opened up entirely new potentialities for measuring the quality of life we are creating for ourselves,

and further, we will gain a sense of control over the future world we are forming.

As a community we have at least begun to understand the scope of our problem in planning for the future, and we recognize both the pitfalls and potentials available to us. We have discovered the tentative nature of the planning process, the impact of topical events on that planning, and the need to distinguish which factors actually shape the mode of our existence.

We have been led by George Nelson's keynote address to examine the impact of good design on such pedestrian features of our environment as our streetlights, our parkbenches, our litter containers, and to seek vitality from the drama of people congregating in areas dedicated to human interaction. He helped us see the primeval attraction in flowing water, and he helped locate the human scale in the size of elements in our physical environment, the environmental ambience that provides the psychological support that only beauty and good design offer in our utilitarian objects. He rejects gargantuism in architecture and demands structures which do not dwarf us physically or emotionally, as he rejects the Mies vander Rohe notion that less is more. Stark abstraction needs to be replaced by a neo-realism and even ornamentation in his view, and he reaffirms the Aristotelian axiom that art imitates life. He affirms man as the measure and perceives abstraction as a continuation of the forces that alienate men from themselves.

And while my eclectic sensibility cannot embrace all of Nelson's views on art, he certainly affirms what must be the heart of any humanistic response to

a plan for the future: Man must be at the center of the plan; he must see himself reflected in his created environment; beauty and good design transcend time epochs, and the sense of well-being stems from a vital, beautiful, functional environment which is ultimately felt to be supportive of the individual's needs.

Nelson, like the Forum's other speakers from outside the region, affirms the physical scale of what he now sees in Omaha and the surrounding area. He encourages rehabilitation and resurrection of older structures which the community had written off. He finds in the architecture from the turn of the century the very ingredients of the humane city. All he requires is the conversion of these structures to uses which will again bring vibrancy to themselves and their surroundings through the addition of people and activity.

Again Nelson's view is consistent with the humanistic role as conservator. Because humanistic disciplines have histories which extend through the recorded human experience, one of the roles they have assumed is that of curator for the past. The need to preserve the objects of their study, to quietly nurture subject matter and ideas that have temporarily lost public favor, and the need to protect subject matter from all epochs on the time continuum, are strongly felt by the humanist. It is a perception that knowledge and the human good are cumulative processes, and while individual time periods and the objects of study are intrinsically interesting for themselves, and for the insights they allow us into the human experience, the compounded effect of collective wisdom from the ages ultimately informs us of the present quality of human existence. The test applied by the humanist to contemplated change is based on the improvement of the human condition. Simply stated, as it relates to change in the physical environment, it



generates this axiom: If a pristine landscape is to be converted to other uses, it shall enhance human life to the degree that the loss to nature is justified by the long term good for mankind; and the destruction of existing structures and their replacement is justified only to the degree that it creates a more vital and accomodating atmosphere for human experience. The axiom operates from the premise that the human environment is the object of planning and not the by-product of land use with other objectives.

In an analysis of any presentation made to the forum audiences, the final conclusion was always informed by the human and humane environmental concerns. From the Wilsey and Ham consultants, who offer us the San Francisco experience, we heard exhortations for supergraphics, arts festivals, river and water-related community productions. These, in their view, will enable us to focus on existing structures and spaces while enhancing our interest in them through new uses, and through the addition of ornamentation and artistic renderings, as well as the restoration of what is intrinsically interesting in the structures. In effect, they call for a revitalization of much of what already exists, and believe that cosmetics and the addition of aesthetically exciting creations and activities to existing structures will restore centers of human activity.

Mr. Baxter, from the San Francisco firm of Lawrence Halprin and Asssociates, the primary planners of the downtown Omaha Mall, echoes sentiments similar to those of Wilsey and Ham, and George Nelson, but with the special stamp of the Halprin firm. Mr. Baxter and his firm once again voice a concern for people-oriented environments with well designed open space, the conservation of older structures, and their integration with new construction to create an

environment that sustains and supports our human sensibilities. The Halprin-Baxter view envisions more land clearing and a more selective basis for saving older structures, and perhaps requires a more eclectic imagination from the community. But the results of the firm's activity in other cities has probably made it the most respected professional planning team in America. Their planned environments have created a genuine sense of pleasure and pride, and have very often been the focal points of revitalization.

What shall we learn from those who come to us from outside our region and rendered judgments? I am convinced that their collectively taken remarks are a study in first causes. What emerges from their remarks seems to say that the sources of renewal are inextricably bound to an intimate concern for the aesthetic and socio-psychological ambience of an environment that sustains and supports the individual. It is an environment imbued with vitality, that invites human interaction, which encourages multiple activity, that focuses on beauty in its smallest detail and encourages aesthetic delight in the landscapes of imagination, and which exists on a scale that gives the individual a sense of control rather than the sense of being dominated by the setting and structures.

This humanistic expression of revitalization has not been simply an intellectual exercise, but rather represents ideas from people who have been a part of the practical processes of renewal elsewhere. Thus, the wisdom of the humanistic disciplines is once again renewed by people who have the greatest range of approaches available to them, and that humanistic wisdom has been made the basis of their planning activity. But we should further recognize that these first causes do not diminish other causes sought from the Riverfront project. In

fact, if the humanistic concerns are first met, all else will follow, for at the core of every other objective is the predication that people may be brought back to areas that formerly held an attraction for them or for other generations. If people return, business activity expands, job opportunities expand, and social problems tend to be solved in environments dedicated to human well-being. Pride and a sense of ownership return to people. Instead of people turning against what they observe to be a hostile environment, vandalism diminishes in localities where human needs are met, and an increased pedestrian population becomes self-policing.

Regions that plan for people and create an environment of charm with human amenities, and an aesthetically alive and vital atmosphere, don't have to seek industry. Industry seeks them. For industries are people, and where human needs are met, decisions are made to join that community. If that sensibility manifests symptoms of naievety, be assured that those with interests in economic growth will discover and communicate the virtues of our dwelling place. And if the growth of civilized cities throughout the world is a suitable indicator, the creation of our civilized city may pose questions of growth constraint and optimum size rather than questions of our capacity to attract industry.

Through our speakers, we have come to discover once again that the past informs the present, and may inform the future if we allow it to. A city and a region which demolish the evidences of their past lose a sense of continuity, lose their physical points of contact between generations, and finally become alienated from themselves. The vitality of the Old Market in downtown Omaha is testimony

to the vision that one of our major charges for the future is the restoration of our past. Much of the local planning for Riverfront seems to be coming around to this society's role as conservator for the future. A lively new interest in our architectural past is emerging. The economics of new construction is causing a reassessment of the uses to which older structures may be put. Mr. Alden Aust, Director of the Omaha City Planning Department, has seen his proposal for an historical improvement district gain credence in the community. The plan places zoning and demolition restrictions on an area and encourages restoration consistent with the original design of buildings. And amidst all of the proposals and plans that Mr. Pat Pendergrass, the Director of Riverfront planning, has formulated or contracted for, lie the instruments of enlightened humanistic renewal.

Our period of introspection is ending, and now the existential reality of choice confronts us as a community. Omaha's downtown Mall is underway, an exciting symbol for a people-centered environment. What now rises to the level of imminent priority from among all the plans is what shall distinguish the future of our regional community. From the humanistic vantage point, the only choices that insure the future of the region are those based on human amenities and a supportive environment. That is the public sector's responsibility and priority, and will represent a model for the private sector. And when the private sector senses the vitality and the capacity of a humane environment to attract people, they will be eager to invest in that success.

If, in fact, our planning concerns focus on an agreeable environment that

encourages human growth, then the nagging questions of community support begin to evaporate. When the benefits to the community at large become visible, the questions of who will benefit, who will pay, begin to vanish. And the discovery that both the business community and the public interest can benefit from the same events and actions will emerge. We are at that moment in time when the public seeks a focal point for the implementation of some of our plans. The visibility of plans and projects dedicated to the public weal has been minimal, but publicity about the proposals of the private sector has been widespread. A dark suspicion that the Riverfront Development Project will work to benefit only a few exists in the communal mind. Thus the downtown Omaha Mall should be hurried along so that there is a sense of completion in a project dedicated to the public interest. From that may emerge the sense of trust that has been missing in the Riverfront Development Project.

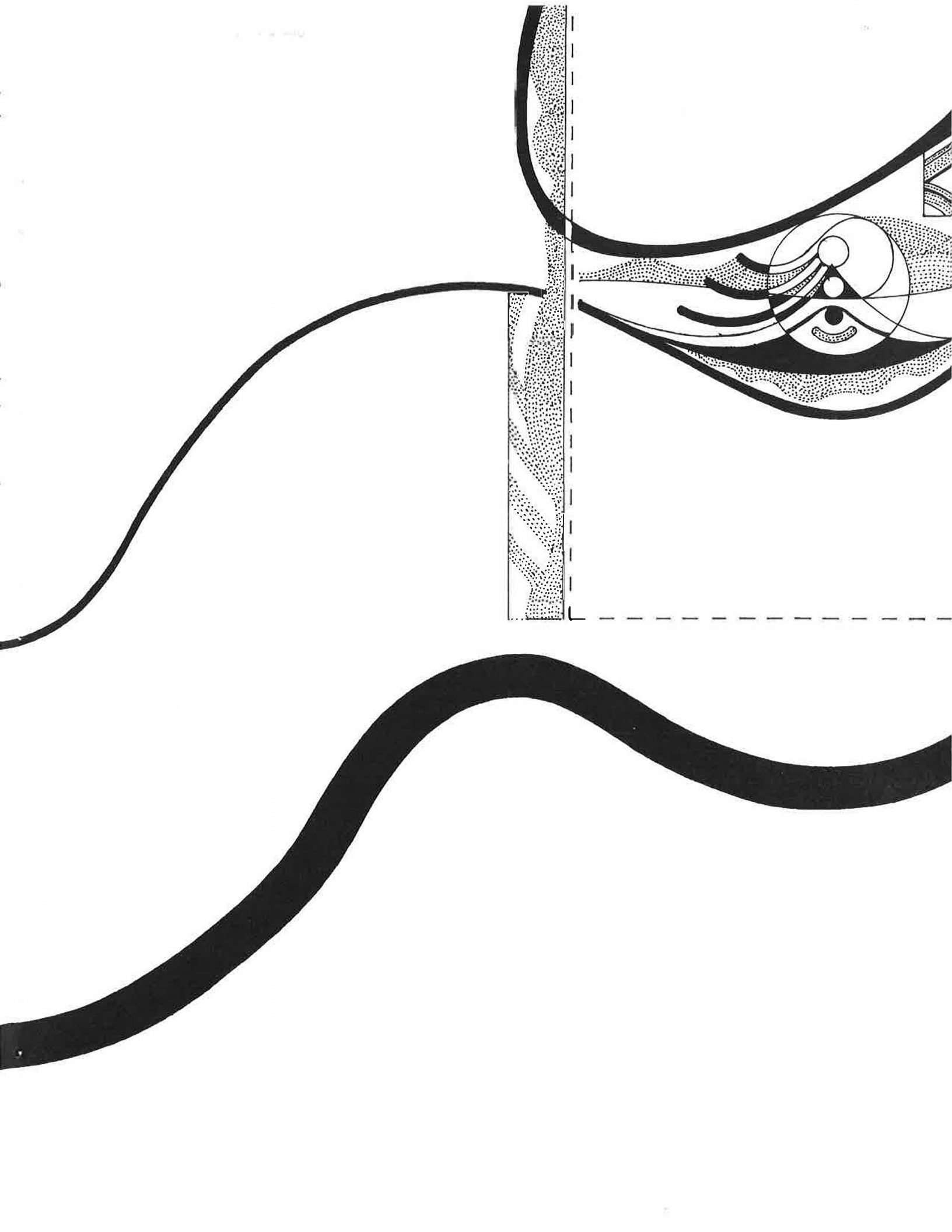
And along the way we may have to adjust our sensibilities a bit and discover that the essential public services include things beyond fire and police protection, street maintenance and garbage collection. We may have to discover that artists and designers, who contribute to our environment in other ways, are providers of essential public services. When we agree that some artists and sculptors on the public payroll are essential, we shall have made that commitment to the people-centered environment that will speak to our community. And when our public orchestras and bands are supported by public funds, and they reach the larger community with their performances, we shall have made our commitment once again.

Two thinkers who have made an impact on our attitudes toward the future

are Alvin Toffler, the author of Future Shock, and Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, writer. Both have advised us to prepare ourselves for enormous technological and social change. Mead believes we can best prepare our children by eliminating expectations of continuity, and creating expectations for wrenching change. And Toffler sees a potential future filled with traumatized people incapable of coping with their technological environment.

If we as a region plan intelligently for our future, I believe we can cushion the shock of change and provide a way into the future by maintaining our continuity with the past. If the physical environment contains a portion of our architectural heritage combined with new structures built to a human scale and blended into an exciting amalgam, and if change occurs against the backdrop of a stable, yet interesting physical environment, we shall allow future generations the succor of the past even in an era of rapid change.

The values of the arts and the humanities have a timelessness that transcends other events and material things in the society, and they should be recognized and planned for as the basis for the future. With that planning, all other events are maintained in their proper perspective, and we shall have planned a future which will honor the past, the present, and those who shall inherit the future.



## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - Morrison, Padve, Goodell

Representing the Firm of Wilsey and Ham, Aesthetics Consultants from Los Angeles, Mr. Larry Morrison, Ms. Martha Padve and Mr. James Goodell, presented a summary of the Firm's findings resulting from a contracted consultation with the Riverfront Development Project. The three were the Firm's active consultants in the project.

Larry Morrison, Manager of the Riverfront Project, is an Associate of the Wilsey and Ham Firm. He is an urban designer and programmer and holds degrees in the Humanities, Architecture and City Planning. His degrees are from Stanford, the University of Arizona and the University of Pennsylvania.

Martha Padve is an independent consultant who specializes in the cultural life of communities. She is a Founder-trustee of the Pasadena Cultural Foundation, a member of the Pasadena Planning Commission, a Director of the Pasadena Art Museum, and an active fund raiser for the arts.

James Goodell is a native of Seward, Nebraska, with an architectural degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and advanced degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. He combines his local knowledge with his professional training.



## SUMMARY: Planning for Aesthetic Quality in the Riverfront Region

Our report consists of three parts - each considering a different aspect of regional aesthetic quality:

Part 1 - the physical environment

Part 2 - the visual and performing arts programs

Part 3 - means for implementing recommended concepts and programs

### PART 1 OVERVIEW: THE SKETCH PLAN FOR THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

We begin by describing the major physical components of the regions' environment - the river, roads, bridges, open space areas, bluffs and urbanized areas. Within the broad framework we illustrate and discuss the major Networks, Linkage Systems and Special Places that are, or could be, part of the aesthetic experience of the region. Major Networks considered are cultural facilities, historic elements, open space, neighborhoods and circulation. Existing and/or potential components are discussed for each of these.

Linkage Systems, the connectors of elements within and between networks, are defined as circulation, signs and map systems, and landscape and architectural systems. We discuss components for architectural urban design guidelines as a means of improving aesthetic quality.

We have defined places or settings for cultural activities. Unique Places suggested include:

Black Elk Neihardt Park -  
outdoor amphitheater setting for 10-15,000 people

Hummel Park -  
small outdoor theater seating 300-500 people

Omaha Warehouse District -  
a major exhibition area for handcrafted objects and a series of Special Riverfront Festival events. All within a context of residential and commercial reuse of the warehouses.

Council Bluffs Historic Core -  
a place for a Contemporary Arts Institute and a major work of contemporary sculpture

Lake Manawa -  
a dramatic amphitheater site

Union Station -  
Western Heritage Museum, Children's Museum and Workshops, Metropolitan Arts Council Headquarters

Camp Brewster -  
a summer fine arts camp

Friendship Park/Central Park Mall -  
settings for music, drama or dance in Council Bluffs and Omaha.

Joslyn Museum -  
environmental and program improvements

Prototype Places are discussed and illustrated including:

Schoolyard Improvements -  
to provide children with places for cultural activities and a more positive, stimulating visual environment.

Main Streets -  
enhancements of the settings of significant old buildings and streetscapes in Council Bluffs, Blair and Bellevue.

Neighborhood Centers -  
reuse of old or new community buildings as centers for neighborhood activities, including the arts.

We also recommend a regional supergraphics system related to surfaces such as grain elevators, warehouses and neighborhood buildings or walls.

## PART 2: OVERVIEW: THE SKETCH PROGRAM FOR THE ARTS

We have taken the position that the existing cultural institutions must be strong before new programs are introduced. We therefore suggest a Metropolitan Arts Council as a coordinating body for all organizations large and small in the region. Financial support is always a problem for the arts. A United Cultural Fund and the strong support of Business for the Arts is essential if the aesthetic quality of the region is to be improved.

No art institution or organization is an island. It is inextricably linked to others. We stress the importance of a variety of programs that will attract everyone. We adhere to the principle that constant exposure to aesthetic experience is the way to educate citizens to participate in the cultural life of the community.

We believe that a "return to the river" through the arts is possible only if residents see the river places as an extension of their normal cultural experience. The same attitude extends to the downtown revitalization programs. European cities have retained vital town centers through the centuries because so much activity takes place there. People live, worship, work, shop, and enjoy town centers as places of leisure, recreation and visual pleasure.

We propose a variety of programs to bring people to town and to the river; a Riverfront Barge for performing arts, a River Festival, a Culture Bus, Tours of lofts and apartments in the Old Market and the Old Warehouse district, increased

use of the Orpheum, early implementation of the Western Heritage Museum.

We urge that the Old Union Station also house the offices of the Metropolitan Arts Council as well as a Children's Museum and Art Workshops.

We believe the Joslyn Museum must define the scope of its collections and the direction it is going to take. We offer the idea of a Contemporary Art Institute for Council Bluffs to be located in the old Grape Growers building or the Dodge Elementary School.

Blair's Black Elk-Neihardt Park is an invaluable cultural resource. There are so many possible uses for it that it is difficult to define only one. But we think music definitely belongs there.

Bellevue is rich in historical lore. A Heritage Square must house its restored landmarks and Haworth Park should be further developed. Brewster Camp offers an excellent natural setting for summer Fine Arts Camp to accommodate groups of youngsters as well as families.

Our future audiences are developed in the schools and in the neighborhoods. Special attention must be given to building Neighborhood Centers and Arts in the Parks programs. We urge released time for public and private school children, grades 1-12, for exposure to cultural places, programs and events. Active interest in the arts has proved helpful in preventing and treating juvenile delinquency.

Music, drama and dance may be adapted to outdoor bowls and amphitheaters up and down the river and throughout the entire region.

We expect leadership from the Universities and Colleges. The operating budgets of most cultural institutions are strained (and drained) by professional

salaries. We propose a training program for Para-professionals for the Arts. Pilot programs may be initiated in Nebraska and Iowa.

City beautification and award projects are on-going. Garden Clubs can play a significant role in the beautification procedures.

Small businessmen may underwrite the arts through the voucher system. Corporate support on a variety of levels is the key to the success of the entire program for the arts.

We salute the Symphony, the Opera, the Junior Theater, the Ballet and the Fine Arts Departments of the Universities and Colleges for wanting to grow, expand, become more professional, and present the finest cultural entertainment. It was a heart warming experience to learn that the public schools don't cut their art programs along with their budgets, but make necessary cuts across the board.

Many fine institutions are given little attention in our report because they are performing so superbly.

Finally, the press and the news media must recognize and meet their obligations to the region and its residents. The press as educator, critic, and promoter of the arts will play a key role in their success. The quality of news coverage will affect public interest as much as any single factor.

### PART 3: OVERVIEW: THE PROGRAM FOR IMPLEMENTATION

We define implementation programs and potential funding resources for both the Sketch Plan and the Sketch Program. Major program categories defined to improve the aesthetic quality of the physical environment include:

Riverfront Growth Strategy

Open Space Development

Highways and Streets

New Construction and Development Projects

Main Streets Revitalization

Historic Preservation and Reuse

Neighborhood Revitalization

Environmental Amenities

Communication/Information Systems

Supergraphics

We also suggest a series of implementation techniques to implement these programs including:

Zoning

Design Guidelines

Capital Programming

Assessment Districts

Growth Management Programs

Competitions

Transfer of Development Rights

Tax Increment Redevelopment

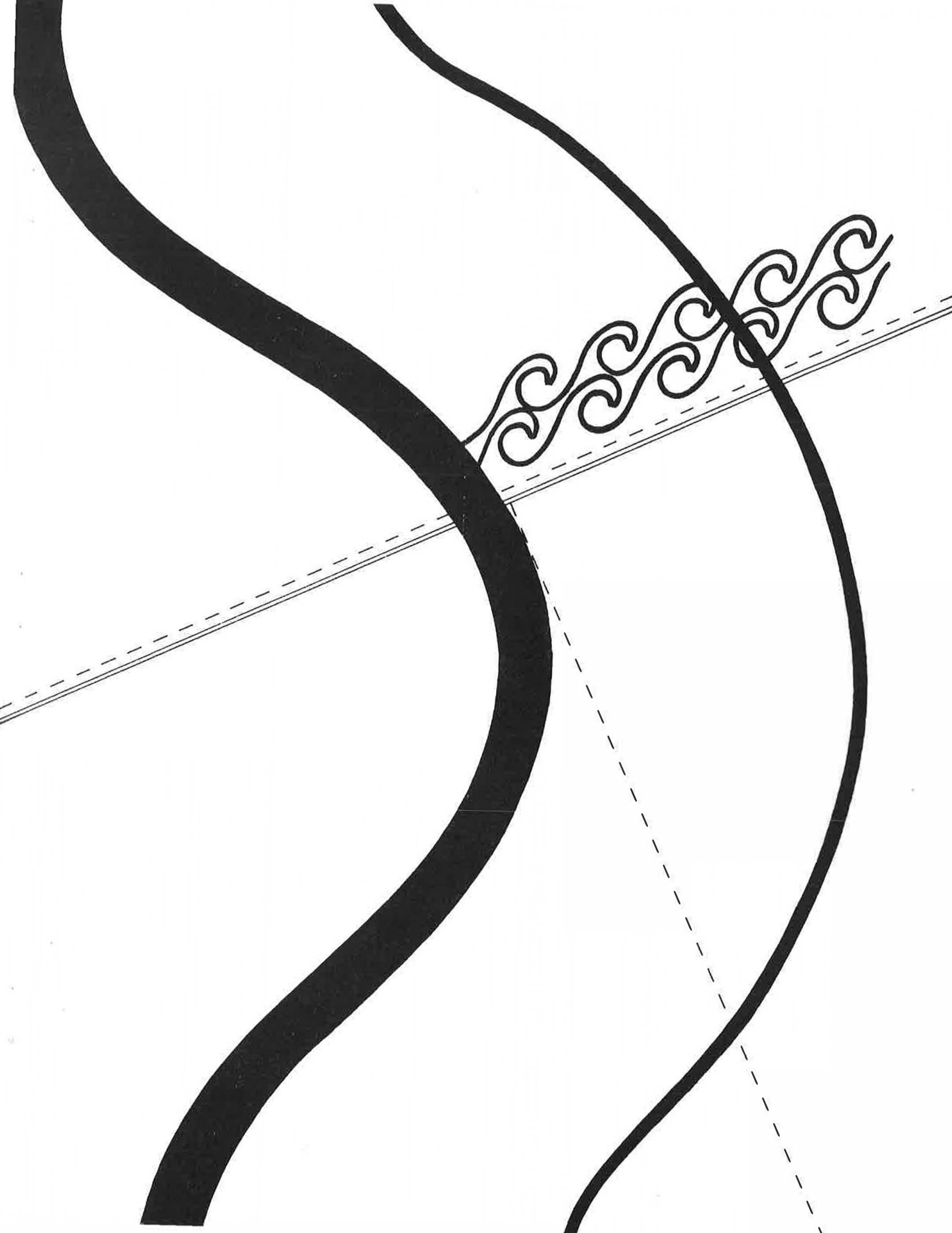
Loan Pools

To encourage improved design quality we suggest formation of a Metropolitan Design Quality Council.

Our recommendations for improving cultural activities relate to several key program strategies. These include creation of a viable Metropolitan Arts Council and initiation of individual projects by both the public and private sectors.

We conclude our implementation recommendations with a Next Steps outline which suggests an immediate emphasis on:

1. Creation of a Regional Arts Incentive fund with moneys contributed by both the public and private sectors.
2. Preparation of an Integrated Grant Application for the Arts, which would seek funds for implementation of the suggested physical environment and cultural programs from the State Arts Councils, the National Endowment for the Arts and other sources.
3. Establishment of the Metropolitan Arts Council.
4. Follow-up study of the potentials for establishing the Metropolitan Design Quality Council.





### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - Thomas A. Kuhlman

Though Dr. Thomas A. Kuhlman is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, his roots in Nebraska are deep: his great-grandfather, Thomas Ashford, settled in Dakota County in a now extinct village on the Missouri River in March, 1856. Dr. Kuhlman received an Honors Bachelor of Arts in Classics from Xavier University in Cincinnati, and was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Brown University, where he received his Master's and Doctorate in American Civilization. He has taught at Brown, at Georgetown, and since 1967, at Creighton.

He is a member of the American Studies Association, of the Omaha Symphony Council, of the Advisory Board of Landmarks, Inc., of the Nebraska Writers Guild, and the Dakota County Historical Society, and is Heritage Chairman of the Omaha-Douglas County Bicentennial Commission. He writes frequently for the World Herald and for professional and religious journals.

THE WRITER AND THE RIVER CITY; PRONOUNCEMENTS OF JOY,  
PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

by Thomas A. Kuhlman

The poet is Carl Sandburg:

I am riding on a limited express, one of the crack trains of the nation.  
Hurtling across the prairie into blue haze and dark air go fifteen all-  
steel coaches holding a thousand people.  
(All the coaches shall be scrap and rust and all the men and women  
laughing in the diners and sleepers shall pass to ashes.)  
I ask a man in the smoker where he is going and he answers: "Omaha."

In that piece of free verse, Carl Sandburg was talking about destinations. The man in the smoking car said his destination was Omaha, merely Omaha; to Sandburg this statement was ironic: he was thinking of the destiny awaiting each one of us as a mortal human being. As much as he was a lover of trains-- and so much of his life was spent along the route of the Burlington Railroad, which had as its motto "Everywhere West" --and as much as he would be sad to see how completely his prediction that the coaches of the Burlington and the Union Pacific would become scrap and rust has become true right here in Omaha, his real interest first and last was in human beings.

We are here tonight at this second gathering of the Riverfront Forum to talk of the destination of Omaha, and of the human beings who live here. We are here to ask questions and to exchange ideas about what we can do to make our river city a better place, where each citizen can decide for himself his own destination. We are here to talk about a city and a river environment which will not only hinder or obstruct but which in a positive way will assist each citizen in becoming all he can.

What business has a professor of literature speaking at a Riverfront Forum, where our concerns must be the solid realities of land and its use, buildings and their uses, power and money and theirs?

Let me answer that question by recalling of just a few weeks ago.

In early August about one hundred Omahans, interested in the preservation of our natural environment, gathered for the dedication of the new nature-and-history trail in Hummel Park. The trail was a bicentennial project, in which high school students employed with the Youth Ecology Service worked through the summer to protect and develop one of the most scenic and historic areas in the Missouri Valley so that we today and generations after us might enjoy the wonders of that bluff-climbing forest.

A dozen speeches were given, mostly by the young people who had done the hard work. In their remarks they talked modestly and yet with satisfaction and humor of the things they had accomplished. They thanked each other and the adults who had guided them, and lightly teased each other for the opposite views of "goofing off" or being too "gung-ho." Few if any of the boys and

girls realized that they had been working in the tradition of the WPA or the CCC camps of forty years ago. Nevertheless, all of us in the audience thought their remarks were perfectly appropriate.

Later in the day, after the crowds had returned to the city, I returned to Hummel Park -- I live only a short walk away -- and by myself began to hike the nature trail. I walked perhaps ten minutes along the shady path through a part of the woods I had visited many times before. But the new trail had been cleared so as to open up new and awesome vistas. It was a beautiful day, cool and clear, and as I stood at the overlook points the young people had constructed, I gradually became aware of a contentment, a tranquility and peace almost religious in character.

Now I am no pantheist, no romantic Emersonian transcendentalist. As a neo-Aristotelian, neo-Thomist Roman Catholic I do not accept Wordsworth's dictum that "one impulse from a vernal wood / Can teach you more of man, / Of moral evil and of good / than all the sages can." Yet vague sensation led to vague thought and still another vague thought. These towering trees above me, the luxuriant growth in the half-shrowded, half sun-splotched ravines below me: weren't they indeed somehow church-like, inspiring? If only I could find the right words as poets had in the past to express the significance for me of this lovely woods--

Then suddenly my thoughts were no longer vague. I realized that something had been seriously lacking in the dedication ceremony. Of the dozen speeches, all of which had expressed the relevance of ecological concern, not

one had included the words of a poet to describe the forest we were celebrating.

Hardly a serious omission, you may say. What could be cornier than quoting poetry in 1975? The age of ceremonial poetry is past. Bryant and Emerson are stuffy and long-winded; even English teachers say that Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" is a sentimental poem in the worst sense; Robert Frost has nothing to say to Nebraska teen-agers. Our kids know that eloquence is often a mask for hypocrisy, that fancy language is boring, lying crap that usually means an attempted cover-up of corruption and injustice.

I maintain that the omission was a serious one.

By not asking the questions about man and nature and the poets have asked, by choosing to ignore the pronouncements of joy in nature poets have made, the speakers inadvertently made themselves one with the man in the smoking car in Sandburg's poem. The forest they had worked to preserve became no more than the all-steel coaches: something to be accepted without reflection upon its relationship to our deepest needs and feelings, to our individual destinies as citizens of Omaha and of the universe.

Of course these were merely teen-agers. But were they, then, proving Longfellow inaccurate? It was he who wrote, "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I do not mean to criticize the young, but only to suggest that in planning our Riverfront we adults will be wise to think our own long, long thoughts about what we must have in our environment. We might consider the poet

Marianne Moore, a city person whose life and work were concerned with a human response to the city. Her poem "The Camperdown Elm" tells of a great tree in Brooklyn's historic Prospect Park, a tree planted in 1872 and alive nearly a hundred years later, but desperately needing attention:

I think, in connection with this weeping elm,  
 of "Kindred Spirits" at the edge of a rockledge  
     overlooking a stream:  
 Thanatopsis-invoking tree-loving Bryant  
 Conversing with Thomas Cole  
 In Asher Durand's painting of them  
 Under the filagree of an elm overhead.

No doubt they had seen other trees -- lindens,  
 Maples and sycamores, oaks and the Paris  
 Street tree, the horse-chestnut; but imagine  
 Their rapture, had they come on the Camperdown elm's  
 Massiveness and the intricate pattern of its branches,  
 Arching high, curving low, in its mist of fine trigs.  
 The Bartlett tree-cavity specialist saw it  
 And thrust his arm the whole length of the hollowness  
 Of its torso and there were six small cavities also.

Props are needed and tree food. It is still leafing,  
 Still there; mortal, though. We must save it. It is  
 Our crowning curio.

Hummel Park, like Miss Moore's Prospect Park, offers a gift -- the opportunity to appreciate and ponder human nature as it is related to the natural environment. Our river city offers a similar gift: the opportunity to live together in society, in decent harmony with each other, in harmony with our great mid-western prairie sky, land and water. The opportunity is fraught with difficulties, challenges, at times seemingly insurmountable problems. We must have more than vague feelings about these problems, and about the joys of our river city, too. We must clearly articulate them,

so that we know where we are going, and why. Economists, architects, urban planners, sociologists and political scientists can articulate some of them. But there are others that are best expressed in literature.

Let me speak first of rivers.

Men of literature have long found them fascinating. Their beauty and power led naturally to their use as symbols of endless movement, of constant natural change. But as 20th century psychologists have made clear, symbols are not just arbitrary images used by poets to make their verses pretty or by novelists to make their stories a kind of complicated cross-word puzzle. The symbols of literature are often directly expressive of the deepest, most universal of man's feelings, drives, necessities. The natural things of this world, the four elements of the ancient Greeks, earth, air, fire and water, or phenomena such as rainbow, duststorms, vast mountain ranges or simply blades of grass, all express various elements of our emotional and intellectual make-up. We need to be in frequent contact with these things if our minds and spirits are to thrive; deprived of them, we are in danger of becoming unnatural machines.

For most, of course, there is seldom a conscious understanding of the symbolism in one's personal life of these basic things of nature. We know we like grass and trees and flowers and sunshine, and dislike biting wind and blizzards and droughts, and that is that. The Missouri River is just that dirty brown watercourse that separates Omaha from Council Bluffs, and it's fun to get out in a boat for fishing or waterskiing now and then -- what more is

there to say?

Some, however, have found in a river like the Missouri the expression of so much that drives the human subconscious. The Nobel prize-winning poet T. S. Eliot grew up in Saint Louis, and although he spent most of his adult life away from America, in his great philosophical poetry he confessed that he could never forget the meaning of the great river that flowed by his childhood city. To him, the Mississippi's endless, powerful flow symbolized the inescapable force of man's heredity, the influence of both natural and historical events on each of us. In "The Dry Salvages" he speaks of that river, but Saint Louis could well be Omaha, and the river the Missouri:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god -- sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognized as a frontier,  
Useful, untrustworthy as a conveyor of commerce;  
The only problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities -- ever, however, implacable,  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonored, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.  
... The river is within us.

Here Eliot has encapsulated the history of our own relationship with the Missouri River in Omaha. First to us it was a barrier, a frontier, separating the settled East from the western wilderness. Next, our river became a valuable but dangerous artery for trade. Soon, however, the railroad and the highway made the steamboat obsolete, and in the last eight or nine decades the Missouri has become "increasingly forgotten by the dwellers in cities." Since Eliot wrote it has even become almost tamed, thanks to the Corps of Engineers,



seldom raging, rarely destroying, and "worshippers of the machine" propitiate only in the three quarters they leave at the toll both on the Mormon Bridge, and soon that act of propitiation will cease.

But our river is not Eliot's, and tonight I would like to remind you that our Missouri has been an inspiration, too. One Nebraskan has found in it a character and strength we could live without -- that is, if we choose to live as machines, as ants, as clods rather than as men. Nebraska's poet laureate, the late John Neihardt, once descended the Missouri from its source in Montana to Sioux City, and then wrote about the experience in his book The River and I:

I have come to look upon the Missouri as more than a river. To me it is an epic... It gave me my first big boy dreams... There was a dreadful fascination about it -- the fascination of all huge and irresistible things. I had caught my first glimpse of the infinite; I was six years old. Many a lazy Sunday took us back to the river, and little by little the dread became less, and the wonder grew... The Missouri has the strength of a god, the headlong temper of a comet; but along with these he has the glad, mad, irresponsible spirit of a boy. Thus ever are the epic things. The Missouri is unique among rivers. I think God wanted to teach the beauty of a virile soul fighting its way towards peace -- and his present was the Missouri. To me the Amazon is a basking alligator; the Tiber is a dream of the dead; the Rhine is a fantastic fairy tale; the Mississippi a convenient boundary line; the Hudson an epicurean philosopher. But the Missouri is my brother. It is more than a sentiment, even more than an epic. It is the symbol of my own soul, which is, I surmise, not unlike other souls. In it I see flung before me all the stern world-old struggle become materialized. Here is the concrete manifestation of the earnest desire, the momentarily frustrate purpose, the beating at the bars, the breathless fighting of the half-whipped but never to be defeated spirit, the sobbing of the wind-broken runner, the anger, the madness, the laughter. And in it all the unwearying urge of a purpose, the unswerving belief in the peace of a far away ocean.

If in a moment of despair I should rell for a breathing space away from the fight, with no heart for battle cries, and with only a desire to pray, I could do it in no better manner than to lift my arms above the river and cry out to the big spaces: "You who somehow understand -- behold this river. It expresses what is voiceless in me. It prays for me!"

To Neilhardt, then, the Missouri River which is passing Omaha this minute just as it has since first there was an Omaha is the symbol of ourselves, a visible, there-to-be-seen-and-heard-and-smelled-and-touched expression of the conflicts within us, as well as of our drive for peace.

To Neilhardt, the river has another quality with which to excite us:

From Three Forks to its mouth -- a distance of three thousand miles -- this zig-zag watercourse is haunted with great memories. Perhaps never before in the history of the world has a river been the thoroughfare of a movement so tremendously epic in its human appeal, so vastly significant in its relation to the development of man.

He goes on to tell of Lewis and Clark, of the fur trade, of river heroes like Mike Fink and Hugh Glass. I will leave it to Professor Johnson to tell you in November of the great historical adventures that took place along our river. My subject is not history, not even in the words of Neilhardt. But no literary man can stand on the bank of our river without being deeply moved by the thought of all the human tragedies and triumphs that have occurred along it. Ours is an age lacking in heroes, when events rush by so fast they seem more trivial than tragic, when accomplishments seem triumphs of machines more than of men. But in knowing our river we and our children may know heroes.

My theme has been destinations, and Neilhardt, in the closing words of

that book he wrote about the Missouri, expressed perfectly the goal we must have as we travel the road of Riverfront development: "When I started for the head of navigation," he wrote, "a friend asked me what I expected to find on the trip. 'Some more of myself,' I answered. And after all, that is the Great Discovery."

You are of course aware that Neilhardt is only one of many American writers who have used the experience of a river to find themselves. Mark Twain did it in Huckleberry Finn and other books nearly a hundred years ago; in our decade James Dickey did it in his novel Deliverance, in which four city-bred, city-bound and city-bored middle-aged men, their leader a Burt Reynolds-type, realize the truth that a man cannot fully know himself without some close intermingling with the forces of nature, in all their raw beauty and ugliness.

And of all that we in Omaha have of the elemental, the natural, our river is predominant.

The symbol of the river in literature has a complementary one; that of the bridge. The bridge has symbolized the effort man can make to reach out to others, and to something hitherto inaccessible. In American literature, one of the major poetic achievements of this century was a long work by Hart Crane entitled "The Bridge," in which the poet uses the symbol of the Brooklyn Bridge, that marvel of 19th century engineering which still rises lofty and beautiful over New York harbor, still providing one of the most thrilling urban views on earth. Crane attempts in his poem to comprehend all the complexity of American civilization, all the romance and vulgarity of our history,

and the bridge symbolizes man's great daring leap into the infinite, into the impossibility we cannot resist: declaring to the universe that our human works have immortal significance.

Crane's work is rambling and often obscure; I would like to read from another, earlier poet who exploited so splendidly the joyous experience we can have when we gaze upon the river city from a bridge. The poet is Wordsworth, who usually preferred the rural scene to the urban. But listen to his joy, as he expresses it in lines "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge":

Earth has not anything to show more fair;  
Dull would be he of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This city now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air,  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will;  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The river of course is the Thames and the city is London. Omaha is not another London and can never be; London itself can never again be the clean city it was on the morning Wordsworth described. But if we have no St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey to look upon from our Missouri River bridge, can we look upon anything at all with joy?

We in Omaha have a city whose skyline, while different in character, has as much mass, scale and variety as early 19th century London. We have a river and we have a bridge from which we can view it. Do we enjoy our view?

Of course not. Our Federal Interstate Highway designers have dictated that we worshippers of the machine will view our riverfront skyline only while traveling at fifty-five miles per hour. We are literally forbidden to cross into our city by bicycle, by horseback, by foot: these are not allowable modes of movement for an Omahan of the twentieth century.

And bridges themselves can be the most beautiful of all works of man. The Brooklyn Bridge, The George Washington and Tappan Zee Bridges, the Golden Gate: they are poems themselves. Viewing them or crossing them, we may marvel at how perfectly they soar and sail to perform their function. When we cross them we know we are crossing something, crossing water, a valley, from one place that is behind us to another that welcomes us. An illustration some of you may have considered tonight is found upstairs here at the Joslyn in the painting of New York's 59th Street Bridge by Lowell Nesbitt.

I ask all of you what emotional thrill, what aesthetic experience you get from crossing the Interstate 80 bridge south of Omaha. I would guess that your answer is -- none. The downtown bridge to Council Bluffs offers little more; when we have a Friendship Fountain to see, seeing it at fifty-five miles per hour should thrill only those who like their pleasures short and fast. The new companion to the Mormon Bridge is a little brother -- but you are strictly forbidden to walk across it to see the graceful bend of the river beneath the wooded bluffs of Ponca Hills. No, the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our Omaha stars, or river, or skyline, or hills; we have allowed our machine-worshipping designers to forbid us the joy of contemplating our city.

Again, a minor matter, an irritant only to the sentimentalist? Let me go back to literature, to the play Winterset, by Maxwell Anderson. Anderson's subject is a fictionalized version of the Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy, which in the 1920's so violently stirred up the American intellectual community. Anderson's theme is that modern industrial society has become inhospitable to the emotions and rights of the decent individual, that the combination of government and private financial power can crush good but naive or stubborn men.

The major, unforgettable scenes of Winterset take place on the bank of the East River in Manhattan, at the foot of the piers of one of the great bridges. Just a verbal statement of the setting tells us we are in a region of rats and refuse, of shanties and festering, filthy undergrowth, where only the dispossessed dare approach. But Anderson's written conception was made material by perhaps the greatest of all American stage designers, Jo Mielziner. His genius seized upon the basic image, and the stage set he designed presented a visual representation of urban alienation that has probably never been surpassed. The human characters in the play are dwarfed, turned into tiny, helpless, pathetic children by brutalistic piers which seem less to soar than to hover over everything like the legs of an elephant over a mouse; their heavy sides and the great void they define are lacking in everything that means warmth, humanity, individuality. Even the cables of the suspension bridge, which could be so fine and delicate and exquisitely ethereal are beyond the reach of pitiful humanity, so high above as to be beyond even dreaming about, utterly

irrelevant and unattainable. The figures on stage are clearly the beaten, crushed vermin the society which has built such a bridge has little care for.

To Wordsworth, then, the river and its bridge meant joy. To Anderson they meant horror and alienation. Does the Missouri River in Omaha offer us joy? Or alienation? Or neither? I suggest that we have a long way to go before we can boast of joy in the river, and that without care for our riverfront our alienation may increase.

I do not mean that literature tells us we must have along our river only a green Arcadian landscape with sylvan grottoes and gleaming temples. On the contrary, we must rather teach our senses to take delight in the most unlikely of urban scenes, as did the 20th century poet William Carlos Williams, who as one of the early Imagist poets, perceived beauty even in slums and industrial tracts. He did not need roses and violets and carefully manicured gardens to describe; the wild bachelor's buttons and Queen Ann's lace, flowers generally considered weeds, delighted him enormously, and his descriptions of their beauty exhibit some of the finest nature poetry ever written. He had a social conscience, yet he could take this pleasure in walking through a horrid slum: in a haphazard jumble of trash and weeds he might, if lucky, "see a particular shade of green." To him the industrial waterfront was a feast for the eyes with its railroad tracks and towers and pipes and heaps of coal and sand. To him a power house became, to use the title of one of his Imagist poems, a "Classic Scene," the perfect image of composure and dignity. The painter Charles Scheeler was a friend of Williams', and this artist,





known for the precision and clarity and amazing enthusiasm with which he portrayed the visual forms of America's heavy industry, actually used the title "Classic Scene," for a painting which is almost a literal illustration of the Williams poem. Like Charles Demuth, whose painting of a grain elevator, entitled "My Egypt," is displayed in the Bicentennial exhibition upstairs, Scheeler forces us to open our eyes and take a second look at the beauty of an urban scene we unthinkingly consider ugly and appalling.

At this point I am really speaking of the second element of our riverfront: the city itself. This element, the central city particularly, the downtown, the Old Market, is every bit as important to us psychologically as the river, and indeed, is certain to have a greater impact on our day to day lives.

American literature has for a very long time been concerned with the city; a century ago Walt Whitman was celebrating the myriad delights of bustling, brawling New York as half a century ago the uproarious city of Chicago was thrilling Sandburg. In our own generation the city is so dominant in fiction that to speak of the novel at all is almost automatically to speak of the urban novel.

It can be said that the dominant theme of American writing early in this century was an actual flight to the city away from the country and the small town. We name the major and the minor writers and we name those who sought in such places as New York, Boston or Chicago the sophistication and the variety of sensations they needed in order to exist as artists. They chronicled the lives of millions who had no desire to be artists but who still believed that they

could be fulfilled only in an urban environment. The city was necessary for culture, and culture was necessary for the city. The city offered theaters and concert halls, museums and libraries, stores and restaurants with objects and cuisines from all parts of the world, sports arenas, universities, openness to dissent and unconventional behavior, unorthodoxy in religion, social fluidity.

In the 1820's William Cullen Bryant, an American Wordsworth who generally sang of forests and praries, was writing a "Hymn to the City"; a century later our own Willa Cather was writing of sensitive souls who had to leave little Nebraska towns like Red Cloud, despite their love of the prairie, in order to fulfill themselves. Theodore Dreiser sent his Sister Carrie from the provinces in search of the glamor and richness of Chicago, and Sinclair Lewis's Carol Kenicott in Main Street had to flee from the stultifying intolerance of Gopher Prairie in order to remain a thinking, caring individual. Though he was a lesser writer, Louis Bromfield expressed well the writer's attitude towards the city when he grouped his early novels of small town life under the umbrella title of "Escape."

Sherwood Anderson loved the soil and hated the machine, and yet he found himself rejecting Winesburg, Ohio (its actual name was Clyde) first for Cleveland and then for Chicago and New Orleans. It is particularly significant for us that a recent edition of Anderson's novel Windy McPharson's Son is introduced by Wright Morris, the distinguished contemporary novelist who grew up in Central City, Nebraska. Morris notes the tremendous urge felt by sensitive and/or go-getting small town and country youths to go to Chicago early in this

century to seek their fortunes:

The impact of Chicago? ... If you were born, like Anderson, in the sprawling Midwest, Chicago was the place to go and where you went. Those faded maps on the walls of small railroad stations illustrated this mindless movement at a glance: all the lines led to Chicago. There they stopped... Chicago was money. Chicago was fame. Chicago was the freedom to live as one pleased.

You are familiar, I am sure, with Carl Sandburg's hymn to Chicago, with how he loved it for all its coarseness and lustiness. So much he wrote in that poem surely applied as well to Omaha: hog butcher, player with railroads; in Omaha he would have seen the painted women luring the farm boys beneath the street lamps of 26th and Q.

But of course some of these early writers could see that the city could be a nightmare, death to the body and to the soul. Ninety years ago in Maggie, A Girl of the Streets Stephen Crane portrayed life in New York as hell for the urban proletariat, and writers like Dreiser and Dos Passos, fascinated by their vision of Manhattan which so closely resembled the pictorial vision of the Ash Can school of painters, protested nevertheless that the colorful, teeming city was also the repository of homelessness and poverty on an incredible scale.

Playwrights like Elmer Rice in Street Scene and Clifford Odets in Wake Up and Sing and Eugene O'Neill in The Iceman Cometh saw in the urban life of the common man the very worst betrayal of the American Dream. Closer to our time, the musical play West Side Story presented to the mass audience the tragedy of the young in New York who ironically live so close to Central Park,

the great achievement of the brilliant landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, and so close (a warning for us tonight) to the splendid riverfront along the Hudson, with its sweeping views of the magnificent New Jersey Palisades and the beautiful George Washington Bridge.

We must be warned -- and we often are in contemporary literature -- that public and private expenditures on no matter how large or how small a scale are no guarantee of happiness for the body politic. Another great urban planner and architect, Daniel Burnham, laid out in Chicago at the end of the last century one of the world's grandest and most beautiful systems of parks and parkways. Stretching along Lake Michigan for miles and miles, his Chicago parks, originally part of the conception of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893-94, should in theory bring paradise to millions.

Yet the man who is perhaps the chief portrayer of Chicago in modern fiction, James T. Farrell, has shown us in his grim stories of Studs Lonigan and Danny O'Neill that the parks were not enough to save man either morally or physically. In literal fact, one of the worst race riots in American history took place in 1919 in Chicago, and Farrell is accurate in placing his fictional city boys as participants in the brutal savagery in the heart of one of Dan Burnham's great South Side parks.

More recently black novelists have voiced their rage about the state of American cities. One must acknowledge the poignant, justifiably bitter portrayals of Chicago by Richard Wright, Lorraine Hansberry and Gwendolyn Brooks, about Newark by Leroi James, about New York by James Baldwin

and Ralph Ellison. And we must recognize that Ellison is speaking for middle-class whites as well as for lower-class blacks when in his novel Invisible Man he presents with great sarcasm a protagonist so alienated from New York's establishment that he lives by choice in a cave-like cellar beneath the streets of the city, his room illuminated by hundreds of light bulbs powered with electricity clandestinely siphoned from the lines of "Monopolated Edison."

Ellison is advising us wittily that the people of America will forever look with suspicion on a power structure which too seldom seems committed to human needs and too often committed only to increasing profits. When the power structure of Omaha joins in the task of revitalizing Omaha's riverfront, it must, in other words, put the good of individual Omahans before corporate profit.

It is not just the black and the poor and the radical who find modern life intolerable. Saul Bellow, lover of cities, has shown in his novels like Herzog and Mr. Sammler's Planet that the rush and crush and lack of a sense of genuine community in our greatest cities make it difficult for a sensitive man to preserve his sanity, while the less sensitive and even the sensitive among the young revert to barbarism. Bernard Malamud is even more pessimistic in his recent novel The Tenants, a homicidal confrontation between two writers, one white, one black, both of whom have holed up in an abandoned tenement house in the ugliest imaginable yet somehow strangely representative section of New York's East Village.

We must also take very seriously the prophecies of less realistic but equally serious authors, anti-utopian writers like Anthony Burgess, George

Orwell and Aldous Huxley. In their works, A Clockwork Orange, 1984, and Brave New World, respectively, they draw terrifying pictures of what western civilization will be like in the ever-nearing future if certain trends continue. In Huxley's new world almost everyone lives in great glass slabs and boxes, endless towers of monotony that probably seemed fanciful when his book appeared two generations ago but which now cover so much of the planet. In Orwell's 1984, his city is dominated by brutal, windowless, 1000-foot-high government offices which symbolize the total unresponsiveness of dictatorial, undemocratic governments. The great and influential French architect Le Corbusier once stated that a house was "a machine to live in"; the French novelist George Bernanon protested that a house should be anything but a machine if it is to be suitable shelter for a human soul. The dehumanizing effects of life in vast, characterless apartment projects, whether for the poor as in the incredibly unworkable and now-destroyed Pruitt-Igoe project in Saint Louis, or even for the rich, cannot provide the sense of true community a healthy city needs. E.E. Cummings, the American poet, looked at the life-style bred in the fashionable apartments on New York's Park Avenue and summed it up with the acid phrase, "sub-humans in their hatcheries."

But Omaha is not New York or London or Hong Kong or Los Angeles or Sao Paulo. Our problems are not large-scale ones, and if New York is hopeless, Boston in agony, Chicago violent and Los Angeles a melange of kooks, Omaha can still boast a life-style not greatly removed from nature, a scale and a pace of living that are still human. Our moderate size offers us the

chance to be a truly human place for those who seek sophistication and to be a reasonable place for the man who finds only unreason in megalopolis.

But modern literature can tell of the mistakes of cities our size, too. Recently a novel entitled Love in the Ruins appeared, written by a writer of Southern gothic school, Walker Percy. He mischievously yet seriously subtitles his novel "a memoir . . . in a time near the end of the world." That time is the 1980's, and his setting is a city which, though southern, is very much like Omaha in size and culture, a very middle-American city.

The novel is satire, and terrifying. By tragic coincidence, we have a case of life imitating fiction. A major element of the plot has a crazed and alienated black man use a Howard Johnson's motel as his battle station as he murders random whites in a desperate expression of his contempt for middle-class America. The novel came out in 1971; in 1974 such an event actually took place in New Orleans: a deranged black did murder several whites as a form of social protest and the crime took place in a Howard Johnson's motor inn.

Omaha is a city precariously balanced today; our alienation has not yet grown so great as to guarantee us doom, yet we are still a city where money and cultural participation move farther and farther west of the river and of downtown, beyond 72nd Street and Fairacres, beyond Crossroads and Westroads and Regency, leaving the City Auditorium to wrestling matches in which the mob in the seats is more bloodthirsty than the oafs in the ring and to effectively racially-segregated rock concerts and to scatological comedians who

encourage their audiences to hate and hate some more. It is this sort of polarized community that Walker Percy describes. The U.S. is exhausted by an endless war between North and South Ecuador and the two political parties have degenerated into vicious and ignorant upholders of extreme left- and right-wing philosophies. Here is a physical picture of the society he perceives:

At first glance, all seems normal hereabouts. But a sharp eye might notice one or two things amiss. For one thing, the inner lanes of the interstate are in disrepair. The tar strips are broken. A lichen grows in the oil stain. Young mimosas sprout on the shoulder.

For another thing, there is something wrong with the motel. The roof tiles are broken. The swimming pool is an opaque jade green, a bad color for pools. A large turtle suns himself on the diving board, which is broken and slanted into the water. Two cars are parked in the near lot, a rusty Cadillac and an Impala convertible with vines sprouting through its rotting top.

The cars and the shopping center were burnt out during the riot five years ago. The motel, though not burned, was abandoned, and its rooms inhabited first by lovers, then by bums, and finally by the native denizens of the swamp, dirt daubers, moccasins, screech owls and raccoons... Possum grape festoons Rexall Drugs. Scuppernong all but conceals the A & P Supermarket. Poison ivy has captured the speaker posts in the drive-in movie...

Let me assure you, Walker Percy is not just trying to entertain us with a grown-up's Planet of the Apes. You may have heard how in the cities of the northeastern megalopolis today the emphasis on security -- and racial divisions -- have led to upper-middle class housing developments surrounded by walls and moats, with single entrance gates manned by armed and uniformed guards. The security systems of in-town apartment buildings today would have



seemed amazing at military posts a decade ago. And yet as Dundee and the Blackstone-Cathedral neighborhood grow older and as Happy Hollow and Country Club and Florence Boulevard begin to tire, not because we are racists or because blacks are really bad for a neighborhood, but because our frontier mentality has us always moving on and leaving what is left behind to decay, Walker Percy's description of a suburban middle-class development called Paradise Estates is frighteningly real:

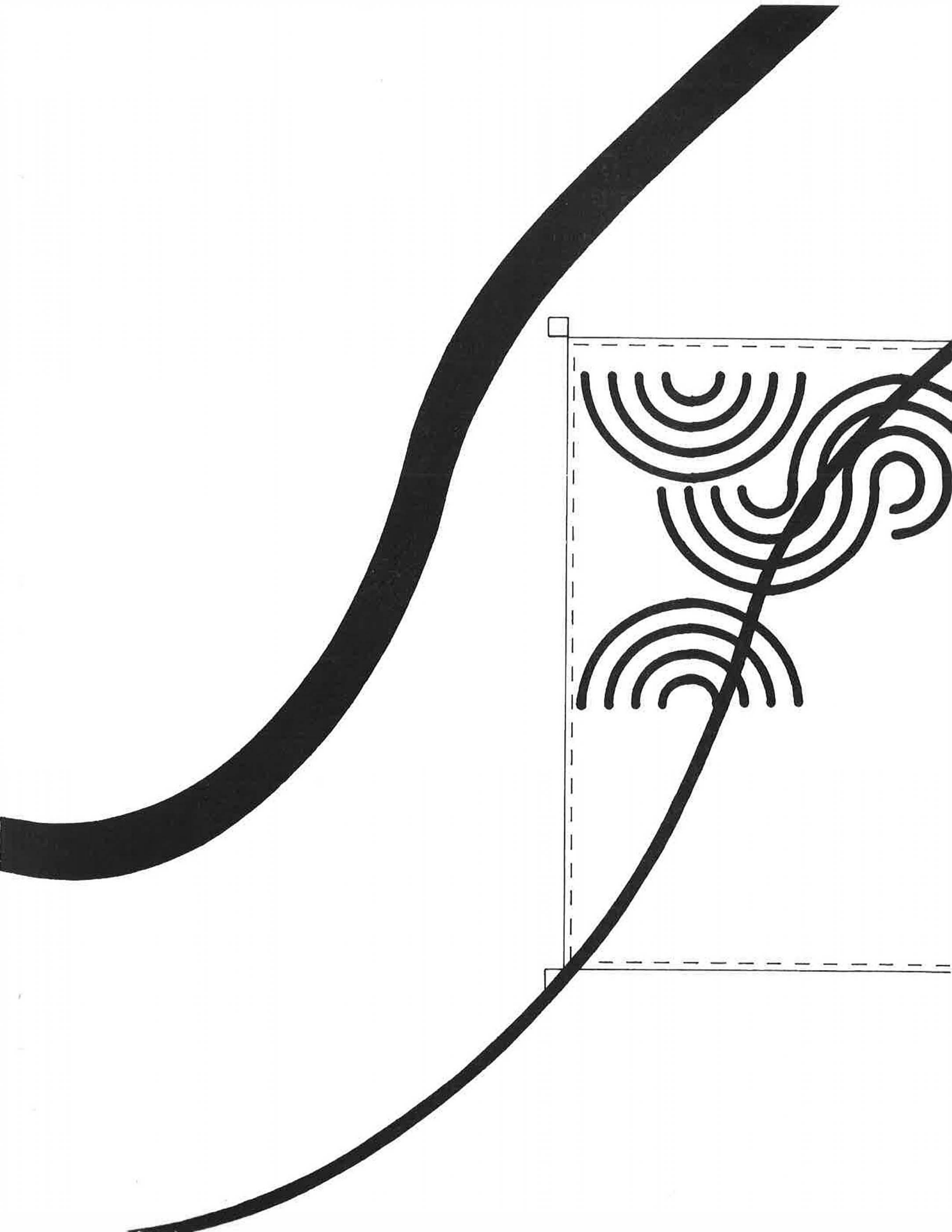
In Paradise Estates we have a private school, founded on religious and patriotic principles, and to keep Negroes out... Paradise Estates is a paradise indeed, an oasis of concord in a troubled land... Americans have turned against each other; race against race, right against left, believer against unbeliever, San Francisco against Los Angeles, Chicago against Cicero. Vines are sprouting in sections of New York where even Negroes will not live. Wolves have been seen in downtown Cleveland, like Rome in the Black Plague... Some Southern States have established diplomatic ties with Rhodesia. Minnesota and Oregon have their own consulates in Sweden... The new Hanseatic League of Black City States -- Detroit, New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles and Washington -- refused last year to admit federal election commissioners.... The United States has fallen upon bad times.

So predicts Walker Percy, speaking of trends we see today.

But I will not close this talk tonight on a negative note. We in Omaha have a city and a river. We need them, we must use them. As tonight we have looked to literature for visions of what we have inherited and what we may use to our benefit, I would like to close with lines you will remember from the inauguration of John Kennedy in 1960. The poet is Robert Frost and the poem "The Gift Outright." Permit me to make a substitution: where Frost used the word "land," I will substitute "city and river"; I think he would forgive me,

for his message is one that applies to Omaha and to the Missouri:

The city and the river were ours before we were theirs.  
They were ours many years  
Before we were theirs...  
We possessed what we were unpossessed by.  
Something we were withholding made us weak  
Until we found that it was ourselves  
We were withholding from our city and our river...  
Such as we are we must give ourselves  
To the city and to the river,  
Such as they are, such as they will become.



### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - George Nelson

George Nelson, the Forum's keynote speaker, is a designer of international renown. After taking a degree in architecture from Yale University, he won the prestigious Prix de Roma and spent two years in Italy studying. During his stay in Italy he helped America discover the modern European architects through a series of articles. Among his varied activities, he has been co-managing editor of the Architectural Forum and an editor of Fortune Magazine, the developer of the "Grass on Main Street" concept in 1942, which evolved into the pedestrian mall, the widely used storage wall for homes and offices, the designer of office furniture for Herman Miller in 1946, furniture which remains the industry standard, an author of numerous articles and the classic book, Problems of Design, which has been translated into Russian and Japanese. He has taught at Harvard and has lectured widely at other Universities. He is a member of the distinguished professional organizations in Architecture and design, and has been the recipient of major awards from his peers.

The company which bears his name has designed graphics, business interiors and exhibitions, among which was the U. S. National Exhibit in Moscow under the US/USSR Cultural Exchange Agreement.

Mr. Nelson is currently concluding work on a book entitled, How to See, which shall probably appear in late 1976.

### Editor's Note

The synopsis of Mr. Nelson's speech was extracted from a tape of the oral portion of his slide presentation, "The Civilized City." Obviously one cannot reconstruct the visual effect of each of 279 slides, and thus the written document lacks the continuity, tone and often ironic wit of Mr. Nelson's program. Whatever you find dull and pedestrian you may attribute to the editor, and whatever is succinct, telling and dramatic, you may attribute to Mr. Nelson. The entire evening with George Nelson was a grand event.

A SYNOPSIS OF GEORGE NELSON'S SLIDE PRESENTATION REMARKS  
ENTITLED: THE CIVILIZED CITY

Mr. Nelson's remarks focus on the city, particularly the downtown core of cities. His message dealt with the ingredients that make cities hospitable to their residents, and attractive to the degree that outside visitors wish to visit them.

Nelson's initial impression of Omaha reflected his Manhattan origins. He was acutely conscious of our good air and his greatest concern was that we hang on to it. In addition, he sensed a place that was very busy trying to revitalize itself, a place that was facing the core decay that is virtually an epidemic in American cities.

While he perceives the many possible solutions to this downtown decay, he is adamant in his opposition to the views of those he calls the "numbers men." "Numbers men" are those who discuss the tax base, economic feasibility and all of the cost-benefit ratios as they relate to revitalization. Their use of money as the sole criterion leads others to frustration or fantasy as they relate to

revitalization, and he believes that too many peoples' lives are affected to allow money to be the dominant criterion. He illustrates a sort of schizophrenic nature in American life which allowed the nation to spend 150 billion dollars and thousands of lives in Viet Nam with no return of any kind, but which demands that economists and others burn up the dry cells in their calculators when the return on proposed investments in cities and housing is calculated.

Nelson's early remarks would seem to seek a different standard of measurement for the benefits and amenities of city life. The standards which apply to the business community relate to profits and staying power in the marketplace, while the standards applied to amenities deal with human happiness, hope, and a sense of one's identity. Nelson indicates that to reduce this to a pricing equation negates the intrinsic values of human existence and succumbs to a market mentality that presumes a price tag is an adequate measure of happiness and hope. Therein lies the societal dilemma, for we are continually conditioned by the assumptions and events of the advanced technology generally subscribed to by the "numbers men." But Nelson rejects technology as a false god and expresses confidence in the relatively primitive technology of the common man, pragmatic technology with concern for the interior man which speaks to a personally based sense of need and well-being.

The "Civilized City," a presentation of 279 slides depicting amenities, design, and architectural features of distinguished cities of the world, is an attempt to define the qualities that give the inhabitants a sense of well-being. Nelson defines the civilized city as a place that the inhabitants like and tourists like to

visit. Existing civilized cities may be discovered by going to any travel agent and seeking an itinerary for a continental or global tour. A list of cities is usually made available, often with little accompanying information. But despite that, the names of the cities cause images to come to our minds. They are places we want to visit, for the good city is very real. Our first thoughts of a civilized city are of monuments such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, but the real appeal is something else. Tourists return from the civilized cities and ask why we don't have sidewalk cafes. They have discovered something that they desire. As they contrast the sidewalk cafes to the McDonalds' Drive In, which demands that they either eat indoors or behind the wheel of their car, they confirm the appeal of the sidewalk cafe. Nelson makes no pejorative statements about McDonalds and in fact sees them as serving a function, but he is concerned with the absence of alternatives in our cultural experience.

He describes the town of Segovia in Spain to illustrate a premise of the civilized city. Segovia is a dull town but people stop there because of an aquaduct the Romans built there. The Aquaduct marches across a valley, and the combination of valley and aquaduct improves upon nature.

The Aquaduct was built simply to carry water and form was a requisite of function, for the Romans lacked the technology to build pipes which could withstand the water pressure. So out of a technologically inferior method came what is today a monument. All cities have small scale equivalents of this aquaduct in their functional amenities such as fire hydrants and manhole covers. But some are better than others, and the better ones become aesthetic



amenities for their cities. In Scandinavia, where there has been a long tradition of city planning, even the very small things are worked out very carefully. Things like litter baskets and mailboxes are given careful attention, and there is concern that they be done nicely. We feel good just thinking about it, and it helps us to recognize how the best cities hang together.

The slides show monuments only by accident because the civilized city is a place where all the little things are done right. This is not the only ingredient of a civilized city, but unfortunately many of our cities have almost nothing in them to like.

Nelson contrasts the Avenue of the Americas in New York to the Lower East Side in order to further illustrate his point. The Avenue of the Americas is made up of fifty story buildings on square-block sites where tired fountains and tame trees and the obligatory piece of abstract art attempt to soften the effect of steel, glass, and vertical gigantism. The individual buildings represent investments of a hundred million dollars, but we aren't tempted to dawdle here because there isn't much to see in the overwhelming buildings. On the Lower East Side we may be surrounded by snivelling kids, drunken husbands, rusty fire escapes, and grafitti, and while we may not approve, there is much to look at on a physical scale we can comprehend.

At the center of concern for a city's life are the necessary things, not the shiny towers of air conditioned living death. The people who work in the Kafka Castles of stainless steel assume the personalities of their work environment. We don't expect to get answers to our inquiries from the people who operate out

of these impersonal castles. Nelson subscribes to the behaviorist school in which the environment shapes the man and finally is the man.

All cities are equal in that they hold people, but they are differentiated in numerous ways. Cities with harbors or mountains as backdrops are unusually blessed. Cities with varied and interesting architecture allow their buildings to make powerful visual statements, and many older cities lie subdued on the edge of domesticated rivers. But the more familiar American cities sprawl as a kind of exema on the landscape with eruptions of tall buildings in the downtown core. The tall buildings lack individual identity even though architects struggle to make them different. What they finally create are topless buildings, those without a sense of vertical completion, and which are covered with a little glass or concrete. While they are spectacular as an artwork of lights, their visual effect during the daylight hours is intimidating and hostile.

Much of what might be Nelson's objective in his remarks revolves about his view that civilized cities have functional necessities which are also urban amenities. He argues for the premise that necessities may be beautiful, and successful cities are those in which the necessities are beautiful. Nelson has tested his theory empirically by asking designers to send him slides of their choices of beautiful necessities. Some generalizations emerged from the slides: the civilized city has room for random unplanned activity; vulgar or folksy things or events are alright; a key to the civilized city is the availability of open space which the planners can create, but which remains a place for spontaneous events rather than shaped to accomodate specific activity.

Additionally, particular kinds of functional necessities came into sharper focus, not only in terms of their historic functionalism, but also in terms of contemporary response to their aesthetic qualities, and the ways in which they connect us to the past.

One of these functional amenities is the public clock, usually located on church towers or public buildings. As towns became more organized, there was a greater awareness of time as a more formal business community emerged. Schedules became an accepted part of business, but few people could afford personal timepieces, and the public clock fulfilled a real need. The clocks exercised time pressure and in that sense became metaphors for the modern city, but simultaneously became place markers and a handy device for orienting one's self in the physical setting. Additionally, the design, ornamentation, and embellishments distinguished each of the public clocks and the tower in which it was incorporated, so out of a functional necessity grew an object of beauty.

Other of the functional necessities that have become objects of beauty in some cities are lampposts. Before the advent of public street lighting one went out at night only with bodyguards and hand-held torches. But with public street lighting, the cities were opened up at night. Fifty years ago the lampposts were highly decorated and ornate, and were messages of civic pride and caring as well as sources of illumination. Those cities which have retained the old ornate lampposts have unique aesthetic treasures as well as functional necessities. Where monetary value has been placed on the old lampposts or other functional amenities, we know that civic pride has died in that city.

The use of signs in a city is the need to cope with the problem of saying no to someone. Signing is part of a learned code of symbols and represents the ways in which a city speaks to its citizens and visitors. Tasteful signs are works of art, and in some instances pure visual jazz. Mild no no's are hedges and fences. Many no no's are symbolic restraints and we avoid encroachment out of respect for others' rights. Physical barriers which are symbolic no no's work to the degree we have trust in our cities and our fellow citizens.

Another functional requirement of cities is streets which may provide beauty consistent with function. Possibly there is no two-sided street that is as attractive as a one-sided street, that is, a street with buildings on one side and open space on the other. But one-sided streets are viable only before land values escalate and the "numbers men" introduce the ideas of economic feasibility and other forms of economic restraint. Bridges are usually attractive to streets. While they tend to be a terminus, you can see through them. Some bridges become extensions of the city and shops are built upon them, while others are simply suspended streets. In many cities there are now second level pedestrian bridges to prevent people from colliding with autos. When we have "open streets", which are closed to autos, peoples' behavior changes. Affection and warmth can exist when there is no need to defend against autos. And where we find covered streets, we know that this is a place where people are cared about. Streets traversing hills hold a particular interest, and streets interrupted by monuments or other unexpected things create a change of pace.

And the little street that terminates in a massive building creates an interesting effect as does the curved street which teases as we inch along to see what lies around the curve. Water streets are functional, and they are also artistic visual urban amenities. And finally the stairs, which connect different levels of the city, are stages where people move at different speeds and exist at different levels. The stairs look good with lots of people on them, and the changing panorama is like a theater with continually different events.

The way a city treats the sky becomes a comment on its role as a civilized city. If buildings go into the sky without crashing into it, and if there are varied shapes that make interesting small-scale skylines, functional necessities are once again beautiful. A hundred years ago, with the advent of factory-made glass and steel support frames, we were enabled to cover space and still let the sky come in. Happily, this has been reinvented with success.

Nelson now explores another area which he perceives as a source of conflict in creating the civilized city - the clash between technology and personal identity.

Modern buildings, made up of standard units, are repeated too much and we get bored. The buildings are too plain and lack visual information. When lots of them are together, we get canyons and the excitement of things crowding around us. But we can't look up at them very long, and we need to look at the floor of the city. In the end we can only comprehend smallness in such things as pedestrian malls. In a well stuffed city many things happen at ground level. Such things as changes in street textures, mini-parks, benches and posters all exist on a scale we can understand and cope with.

Traditionally, our public sculpture has celebrated our heroines, heroes, and heroic events. In the animal kingdom, it has focused on predators like lions and eagles, creatures who control their destiny. But our modern era has created hybrids like the cyborg-half man, half machine-with an air conditioning unit embedded in its chest, an illustration of the hostility of technology to the human experience.

In the contemporary world the shapes of our heroes, our gods and goddesses, begin to melt as though people have forgotten how people look. Our art has entered an abstract period of non-people. Abstract art is rationalized as making interesting use of space. Some abstracts are elegant, but remain stiff. People are missing and their absence from today's art becomes the final comment on how technology has alienated us from ourselves.

Among other things, the city is a time machine. If we can't walk among old buildings which persist, places where we can walk down certain streets and meet our ancestors figuratively, we miss something. A city without evidence it has passed through time is like a person without a memory. The old is visible evidence of the persistence of people in a place. While Omaha's buildings are not necessarily distinguished, they will look nicer and nicer as time goes by. Don't tear them down, Nelson says, or you will be cursed by your descendants. Keep the connections with the past. You need them.

Cities are always more stressful than the country. Stress-relieving devices are a necessary part of the city. And vulgarity, in the sense of the non-elitist taste, is an antidote to stress. The relief of tension comes from parks, funny stuff in places, the lively stuff of athletics or impromptu stuff like street music,

chess players, jugglers, gamblers, fishermen and street drama. And we get relief from just sitting on benches or a patch of grass in public places, the furniture of the city. Grey cities are becoming passe. Grafitti and graphics are now a part of building exteriors and are the signs of human life and identity.

The cityscape is jammed with words. There are business signs and public signs. We do a lot of reading in the city. Billboards speak to us and old signs indicate the past life of the city.

The decor of the shops is a code. Old shops speak of a leisurely pace, of leisurely service, and speak to the kind of city we are in. The design tells us what to expect from a place. We learn an identity without words when we find an enormous umbrella or a six foot long revolver in front of a shop. There is no doubt what the shop purveys.

Markets usually start with a single pushcart. They attract congregations of people who generate bargaining vitality and spontaneous events. People talk to each other in markets, but we can't talk to anyone in supermarkets. The outdoor markets are places to watch and they are pure joy.

Water always starts as a functional element. The public fountain was originally the family and communal water supply. Although its original use is no longer significant, we still get pure fun from using a fountain. It is a good example of ornamentation in a functional thing. Now fountains are a place to get with it, a place to get wet. In New York the cops used to get hysterical if people got in the fountains. Now it is okay. Turn on a faucet and you are an

instant architectural success. Water in almost any form is beautiful, from the traditional fountains to the new fountains that create temporary sculptures. Water releases our unconscious racial memories, and it is no accident that the appeal of Venice, Queen of Cities, is based on water.

European cities tend to have more amenities than American cities simply because they are older. There is realism in the art of older cities. People are very real and everyone used to know how to make images of people. As technology began to dominate, people began to disappear. We forget how to create and reflect people in our aesthetic and physical environment. Most American cities were built in the age of technology, and people tended to disappear as technology grew. People as living, visible, sacred elements vanish as the numbers game grows.

In earlier ages human amenities, rather than technology, were taken for granted. Cities served people, not the technological machinery. Technology is not of the slightest use in terms of human amenities--in fact, it is damaging. The older, stupider, and less sophisticated technologically a thing is the more likely it is to have amenities or be an amenity.

All the efforts to get the old stuff back by adding wiring, printed circuits, or silicone chips is bound to fail, and maybe ten minutes after it is too late, we will find that out. Technology, the god we live by, and a shabbier god there has never been, is a method of achieving things which in its years of decline only succeeds in creating two, three, or four problems for everyone it solves.

President Ford, in coping with unemployment problems, came up with a plan for two billion dollars of new road building. It was a good technocrat's solution,



but not a good human solution. For road building is not labor intensive, and it would finally generate only more cars and more pollution. The Caterpillar Co. and the cement producers would be the only beneficiaries.

Accountants wouldn't buy this, but take the unemployed and give them buckets, soap, water, and let them wash the whole city. The Civilian Conservation Corps did a simple task and it succeeded. This solution wouldn't be acceptable because it wouldn't benefit the big money people, the IBM's or the GM's. Perhaps this is a silly notion, but it is a non-technological solution.

The downfall of this country, if and when it is finally recognizable, will be produced by the practical men; and the disasters will all have been built by the engineers who are the quintessence of practical men in building. Evidence that we are insane is the fact that we are asking the very people who wrecked the manmade and natural environment to come in and fix it up.

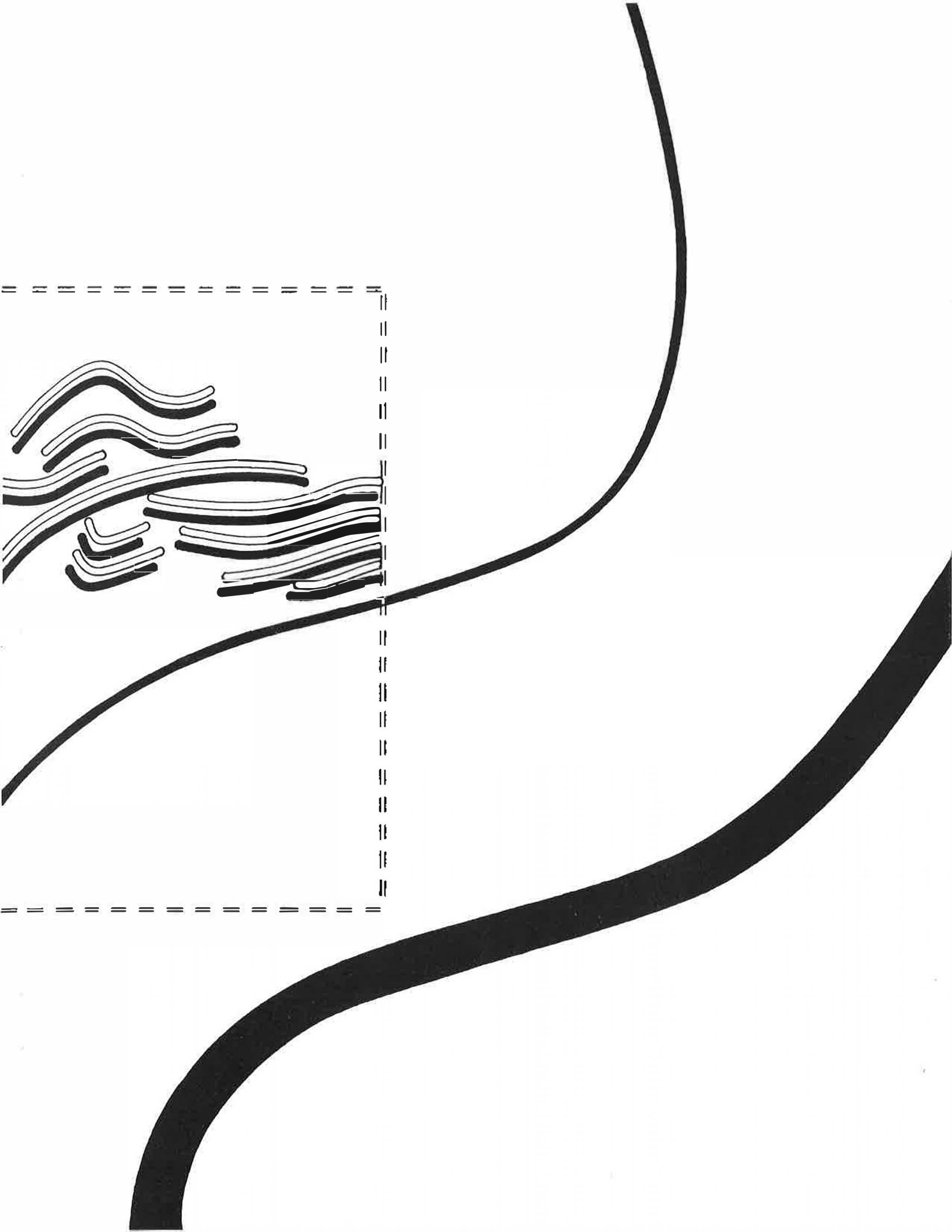
Here are some cogent comments on the state of Omaha. Make it steadily into a liveable place by using lots of funny old buildings with lots of charm and lots of parking lots that can be cleaned out. Take an old warehouse loft, sweep it and you have the best interior in town. The use of warehouses will offend some citizens. They will ask how a warehouse can be beautiful, for only state capitols or things that had an aesthetic intent can be beautiful. These are the same people who love the plastic injection molded Mediterranean cabinets for their kitchen.

Plant a privet hedge around each parking lot downtown. Even kids can transform parking lots into human amenities by planting hedges and turning

them into mini-parks. All downtowns with their present parking lots looked bombed out.

A young New York designer said that billboards, gas stations and utility lines are the sources of visual pollution. But in Manhattan, Nelson noted, none of these causes existed. He concluded that the buildings, the only remaining ingredient, were the causes of visual pollution. Buildings are not usually amenities, and those least thought of as amenities, such as warehouses, most often are the amenities. We need to persuade people with power, people who have reached high positions with high IQ's and Phd's that education has failed them, that they are visual cripples. All they can see is what they need for survival or what they want to buy. They see stoplights or shoe sale signs or gas-twenty-nine cents. This is all they see. They can't see the ugly strip shopping center. If they can't see their environment, how can we expect them to change it?

Get people to see Omaha for the first time and discover its richness: the broken bricks, the manhole covers, the architectural detail--not always good taste, but richness. Then people might decide to just wash the city, save the warehouses, get some cars off the streets, and finish the mall. Nelson is writing a book which will help people learn how to see. When Omahans learn how to see, he says, they won't need anyone to help them. They will fix their city up themselves.



## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - Hubert Locke

Hubert Locke was Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service as well as Associate Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In January of 1976, he assumed a new position at the University of Washington at Seattle as Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Professor of Public Affairs.

He came to UNO from Wayne State University in Detroit, where he was Director of Religious Affairs. In that capacity he guided the creation of the Cisler Library Archives on the German Church struggle, a major collection of documents relating to the role of the German Church during the National Socialist era. He also taught in Germany and Italy in Wayne's European Studies Program, and was guest lecturer at the University of Mainz.

He did a major research project in Detroit on "Urban Crime and Social Planning" for the U. S. Department of Housing and Social Planning - Wayne County Planning Commission. He also served as Administrative Assistant to the Detroit Commissioner of Police in 1966 and 1967.

Dean Locke is the author of two books, The Detroit Riot of 1967, and The Care and Feeding of White Liberals. In 1974 he co-authored The German Church Struggle and Holocaust with Franklin Littell.

Dr. Locke was educated at the University of Michigan and holds three honorary doctorate degrees.

## RIVERFRONT AND THE FORGOTTEN OMAHAN:

### The Citizen as Expert

by Hubert Locke

This address is essentially a plea to all of us who are the "specialists" and "authorities" on urban problems and planning, for recognition of the citizen -- plain, ordinary, Joe and Jane Taxpayer -- as a uniquely competent, qualified expert on cities to whom we ought to listen with care and concern, of conversely, as persons to whom we will fail to listen at our own peril.

Our listening to the citizen-expert, if it is done effectively, will take a special form. It will not involve opinion surveys or public hearings or task forces and committees through which we seek citizen ideas and priorities as much as it will be through the simple, time-honored, self-validating process of participant-observation. We will, in essence, watch what average, ordinary people do -- how they spend their time, what turns them on, how their informal associations evolve or emerge -- and we will translate this empirical data into the planning and design of our cities, and especially our city center

areas, in a way that will immensely aid the revitalization and sustaining visibility of those areas. I believe this task of listening-observing-translating-planning-designing to be one of the most important challenges Riverfront can undertake in the immediate months ahead.

The whole notion of involving citizens in community planning efforts is of such recent vintage that we are apt, I fear, to believe that our present efforts in this direction are our best efforts. When we combine this belief with the historic, non-interest of the greater majority of average citizens to become directly involved in any community planning effort that does not directly affect their personal welfare (e. g. whether their home lies in the path of a proposed freeway corridor, school site or public park), we find ourselves as planners in the unique position of advocating the right principle (i. e. citizens should be involved in community planning efforts) and simultaneously of having a perfect excuse for not doing anything about it (i. e. "we held a public hearing" or we invited the poor or minority representatives to join our task force but they didn't come to the meetings). "

I shall spare you a lengthy recital of what that kind of attempt at community involvement has gotten us, except to note that it produced a good many of the horrid mistakes in planning and the community apathy or hostility over what the planners produced, that we have witnessed for the past two decades in this nation. Everything from urban renewal efforts in the 50's, to Model Cities and poverty programs in the 60's, to police-community relations programs and

planning expertise we simply encourage, unwittingly or otherwise, the de-meaning, the dishonest and the exploitative citizen-participation processes that have, in the past, turned so many citizens off.

Let me make clear that my comments are not designed to discourage efforts to directly and effectively involve citizens in planning efforts; to the contrary, if anything, I wish to encourage an expansion of such efforts, as long as they are undertaken authentically and genuinely. And that calls for more than simply endorsing the idea of citizens-involvement or inviting and encouraging task force attendance. It requires recognition of some of the peculiar nuances of what it takes on the part of professionals to secure authentic involvement of citizens including, for example, the use of such processes as advocacy planning in which citizens are provided the technical resources that enable them to participate in planning efforts as equal partners.

I am also issuing a plea for a fundamentally different kind of planning process as well, not as a substitute for the task force-public hearing approach but as a complement to it, one that calls for sharpening the observational and analytical skills and insights of those of us for whom planning is a professional task; this lies at the heart of my presentation and it is to this aspect of planning and citizens-participation that I now wish to direct your attention.

For the sake of keeping my academic credentials reasonably intact, let me begin with a somewhat formal description of the matter. We've learned with some relative degree of sophistication in the social sciences to identify what is called "social character", which may be described as "...nothing more than

the probable behavior of an individual when confronted with a given kind of life situation" (Scott Greer, "Urbanization and Social Character" in The Quality of Urban Life, Safe Publications, Inc., pp. 95-127). As Greer notes "...social character reflects the common culture, and can best be identified through social behavior, including verbal behavior. It is always a constructed pattern inferred from observations over time...". (Ibid. p. 99).

Now the important thing about social character in connection with our specific concern is that it varies widely within a society, among different age, sex, ethnic, occupational, regional and racial groups. "This variation", Greer observes, "can be a major resource for the society, for it supplies an array of alternative possibilities for social action" (Ibid. p. 100). Unfortunately we tend to know more about social character and variations in social character among Balinese and Samoan peoples than we do about urban dwellers in American society, but what little we do know suggests that many urban citizens still reflect a social character that first emerged in the early periods of industrialization when citizens, as a survival technique, learned how to avoid encounters with the public sector (i. e. how to avoid contacts with the police, other municipal agencies and formal institutions). This simply means that the image of the publicly-responsive citizen who takes a direct, active involvement in the public affairs of his or her community is still an underdeveloped virtue in American society. But we also know that these same citizens develop highly active participation in other, "non-establishment" forms of urban society, assume leadership roles in those structures, and exert all the characteristics that we wish we could tap and



direct into our civic planning processes such as Riverfront.

Let me try to illustrate this point with an example:

There is a phenomenon which is the plague of every urban planner, which is not as visible in Omaha as in larger cities where a dramatic in-migration from the South has occurred, but of which Omaha has a number of examples. It's called the store-front church: it represents a small religious sect or cult which may or may not be attached to a mainstream religious denomination and which gets its name from the fact that the religious groups holds its services and meetings in a small, rented commercial building, usually on a major traffic thoroughfare in low income neighborhoods. Now it is the social structure, organization and character of such churches that are of interest in this instance, for what we often find is that persons who have very low participation records in civic efforts -- they do not belong to the PTA or to homeowner's associations, they may vote in municipal elections sporadically if at all, they are not likely to be found petitioning the city council on some matter, etc. -- nevertheless, have a very high and reactive participation in store front churches, including key leadership roles in those institutions. There are several clues I think we can glean here about citizens participation and the planning process, among which are the factors of size and setting. People who feel comfortable in a small group, surrounded by familiar faces and shared experiences may not easily translate their leadership capacities or abilities to articulate community needs, anxieties or priorities into the larger, more formal planning settings with which we are more comfortable. Planning-wise, this may suggest that our time in trying to secure citizens'

involvement might be better spent sending several, alert, sensitive, sensible persons out to make contact and engage in discussion with citizens in these types of settings than we will in trying to fathom out who is the indigenous leader in North Omaha or the recognized spokesman for South Omaha, and then trying to make certain we at least get to use that person's name, if not his or her involvement, on our task force letterhead.

But the planning process that I wish to emphasize goes beyond this and into an area that I believe is based upon some of our fundamental theories in the social sciences that simply need to be honed and approved. Again, let me illustrate with an example:

If one stands in Trafalgar Square in London or sits at a sidewalk cafe on Place St. Michel in Paris or Union Square in San Francisco, one is immediately impressed with the fact that these are alive, vital, vibrant areas. If one begins to observe more closely and by "sub-groups", one will notice young people sitting in small groups chatting, or older citizens sitting alone reading or watching people pass by or in groups of two or three, sometimes enjoying a game of checkers...or one notices a business type pausing on a bench to glance through a report before his next appointment or engaging in earnest conversation with a colleague. Now all this is well known to planners and we generally try to facilitate this utilization factor in public squares and parks by a judicious use of park benches and a piece of sculpture here and there. But if we look further we will observe the unplanned "happenings" that give character and uniqueness to a central city area; Union Square is famous for the sidewalk vendors who spread out their wares

hoping to make a sale from a passer-by, or for the occasional mimic who entertains strollers through the square. Now we ought, by this observation process to plan our central city areas in such a way as to facilitate (not structure but encourage) the unplanned, spontaniety of parks, squares and malls. Hyde Park Corner in London is world famous for its free speech tradition; that happens not because planners erected a plaque at Hyde Park Gate saying "here we've planned to permit anyone to say whatever one damned well pleases" but rather because "public site facilitates and encourages an expression of the social character of a people. My point is that from the planning perspective, this should not just happen by accident, we should, with the same diligence with which we pore over market analyses, feasibility studies, economic indicators and other studies, siting of a retail store or an office building, pursue intensively social character studies and observations upon the basis of which we can plan those amenities that will encourage citizen utilization of and participation in a truly vital Riverfront.

If we translate this observation into the Omaha setting for a moment and into Omaha's Old Market in particular, the point becomes eminently clear. Old Market has a style, a social climate, a social character, if you will, that I would submit was not created by the Old Market entrepreneurs but rather one that represents a response to the social characters of many sub-groups in our city. Kids with long hair, blue jeans and bare feet mix, with relative ease, with matrons in fur coats and business types with attache cases in that two-square block area; this is citizen participation at its best and with all of its economic, social and

cultural implications apparent. The planning question is WHY? Why does this mix occur without friction but instead with vitality? The easy answers are of course, the obvious ones: perhaps because Old Market is something new? Perhaps because it is the only game in town? Perhaps because it offers a little something for everyone -- a turn of the century nostalgia for the older set; posters and pot-holders for the younger crowd. But easy answers are always suspect answers, and although I, too, am fond of giving them, I suspect in the final analysis we really do not know why an Old Market is viable except for one obvious fact that it works! If we are to really do our jobs, however, we need to discover why it works, what is the social character to which an Old Market or a Trafalgar Square speak, how can we identify and maximize that social character in our planning processes so that when a Riverfront is finally built we can ensure ourselves that there will be citizens' participation in the ultimate sense of the word, namely that citizens of all ages, sizes, sorts and disciplines will delight in using it continually as a place that responds to their human needs.

We go then a final step forward in our analysis by raising yet one other dimension of the citizens' involvement in the planning process, an involvement that seeks to turn an urban problem into a dynamic urban planning and development resource. I refer to the immense ethnic diversity of the Omaha community which is an unanticipated but delightful discovery for any newcomer to this city. Ethnic diversity is one of the great, subterranean factors in urban society in America; it looms just beneath the surface of urban life as either a massive problem or an enormous potential. In Boston, to take a contemporary example, ethnicity is an

explosive problem; in Omaha we have the opportunity to make of our ethnic diversity a tremendous resource and focal point for creative, imaginative planning -- and there is no reason why Omaha's Riverfront development should not become a national model for this kind of development.

We know a great deal in the social sciences about what in the social sciences is called ethnic and racial sub-culture variation which, in plain English, simply means that different ethnic and racial groups have differing patterns of family rearing, religious orientations, formal and informal associations, etc. In the social sciences these are generally treated as "problems", but they are such only if one operates from some supposed, normative view of what urban society and culture is all about or should look like. My suggestion is that "ethnic and racial sub-culture variation" should be viewed as a potential, not as a problem, and that if we could find effective ways in which to do this, we might discover ourselves developing enormously exciting plans for the redevelopment of the entire central city area -- in Omaha and elsewhere.

Let me posit an example: 24th Street North from Cumings to Spencer is a nightmare from a planning perspective. Vehicular traffic consistently moves at about fifteen miles an hour less than the speed limit, people sit out on the sidewalks on folding chairs or stand in front of store buildings kibitzing with friends and acquaintances or just watching the world go by. Although this represents a living, local example of Jane Jacob's thesis regarding the important function of sidewalks in a community, the typical, traditional planning response would be to plan a freeway right up the middle of 24th Street; it would speed up the traffic

flow, get rid of ugly, commercial and abandoned building eyesores and, in police language, stop loitering. I've seen such planning implemented in a half-dozen cities around the nation.

The participant-observer principle of planning suggests that we first ask what is socially going on here that is positive, cohesive and resourceful, and that if translated into an improved physical setting might become a basic ingredient in community renewal and revitalization -- and to ask the same questions of Italian, Czech, Polish and Chicano enclaves in South Omaha. Second, we ask what elements in what we have socially observed are environmentally conditioned (i. e. do people sit and stand on sidewalks because their homes lack air-conditioning or there are no parks, etc.) and what is sui generis (i. e. would people still gather on sidewalks even if there were parks and air conditioning)? Then comes the most critical question and the most difficult: Why? Why have peculiar and unique forms of urban association and behavior developed among different racial and ethnic groups and how can those elements be positively incorporated into the planning process?

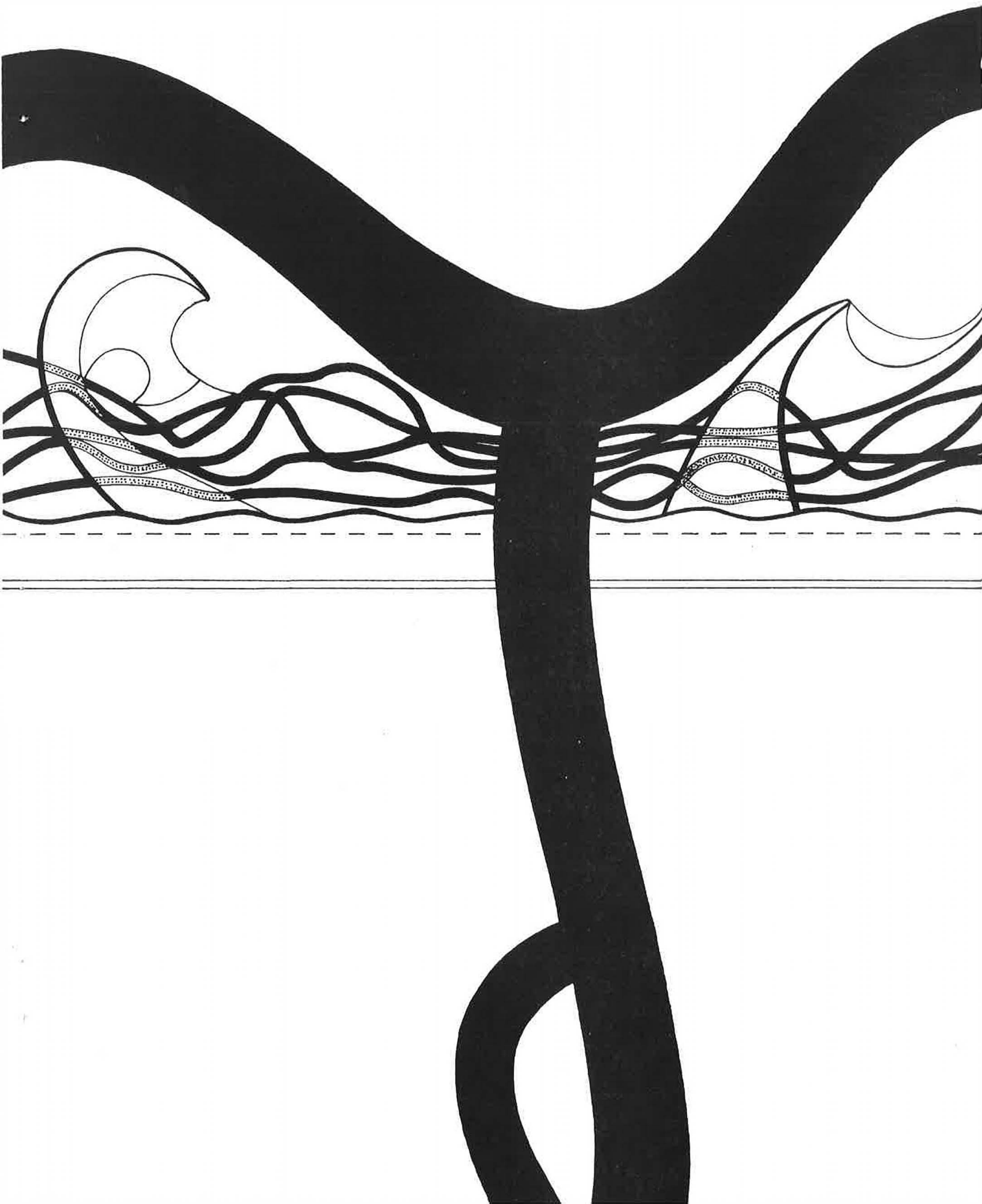
All of this may seem to depart radically from the announced theme of this address but I submit that it does so only if one thinks in traditional terms either about planning or about citizens participation. My criticism of the former is that it has become a professionalized, bureaucratic function in American society -- one which all too often proceeds on assumptions of expertise and on perceptions of what is best for people rather than planning with people. It is this intrinsic flaw in modern urban planning which has given rise to the citizens participation

community development efforts in the 70's has suffered from this sterling principle of citizen's participation which has become so difficult to implement, even in those rare instances where the principle is taken seriously. It has been difficult, for example, to persuade planners to hold task force meetings for other than the convenience of other professionals whose 9-5 working day makes it possible for them to attend morning or afternoon sessions but inconvenient, if not impossible, for the fellow at the packing house or at Union Pacific, or the woman at Northern Natural Gas or Western Electric. And voluntarism, as all of us know who engage in it, is an expensive proposition; what most of us spend in parking fees and gasoline attending one month's worth of task force meetings probably equals a day's pay for the average citizen-taxpayer.

The major reason this approach to citizens' participation has not worked however, lies in the simple fact that planning is a highly technical profession. We can be grateful that it has become such for that fact means increasingly the bringing of competence, knowledge and specialized skills to a critically important, complex process. But it is this very competence and technical expertise which often overwhelms the average citizen who does not have land use studies or demographic data or forecasting methods or quantitative analytical models upon which to draw, at his or her fingertips! To expect that citizens will sit comfortably and confidently as full fledged partners in a technical planning process is to expect the impossible; simultaneously, if citizens are treated as unskilled and unknowledgeable, governmentally-imposed, potentially devastating obstacles to our otherwise unassailable professional

thrust in the first place. But my quarrel with the latter principle (i. e. citizens' participation) is that it has become structured in such a way, however sincerely, that it virtually precludes authentic, genuine citizens' involvement in the planning process. My suggestion, if not plea, is to recognize that expertise which citizens themselves gain simply by their ability to survive in a complex urban environment and to explore the techniques of patient, discerning observation of this survival process as a way of authentically identifying what citizens want and need, fear and hope for -- and that of the results of such observation can be translated into imaginative planning for the redesign of our city, we will have achieved citizens participation at its best -- and Omaha will be a far better community for our having done so.





## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - David Allor

David Allor holds Bachelor of Architecture and Master of City Planning degrees from the University of Michigan. He also holds a Master's degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Social Science from Syracuse University. He has taught at UNO and is currently doing research in planning methodology at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. In 1974 he was the Coordinator of the Community Design Center in Omaha, which has been responsible for drawing the facilities requests of Omaha neighborhood groups into conceptual design. Accomplishments of the CDC include:

1. Original concept design for the Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Center. This project has been funded. The start of construction awaits settlement of jurisdictional problems.
2. Original concept design for the Bryant Cultural Center at 24th and Grant Streets.
3. Original concept design for the South Omaha Neighborhood Association facility at 36th and R Streets. This facility is nearing completion, money having been provided by the HUD Community Facilities Fund.
4. Original concept design of the Conestoga Club Housing Program in the area of 24th and Lake.
5. Land-use plan for the Urban Housing Foundation. This involves 10 acres in the 36th and Evans area.
6. Health facility and commercial concept designs for small businesses.
7. Comprehensive plans for neighborhood redevelopment in East and South Omaha.
8. Riverfront recreational facility study for the North Omaha area. The feature of first priority, work in Adams Park, is now being completed in the 33rd and Bedford area.

## THE IMAGES OF 'RIVERFRONT' AND THE EVERYDAY LIFE:

### A Micro-sociological Interpretation

by David Allor

In Saint Augustine's The City of God two concepts are presented which are of central importance to the presentation this evening. With respect to the city of man, Saint Augustine states:

The early city seeks its peace in a harmony of the wills of (persons) with respect to the things of this life.

The concepts are "a harmony of the wills of persons" and "the things of this life." The majority of the comments will center on the prerequisites for reaching such a harmony, employing the related concepts of "expectation", "promise-keeping", "trust", and "confidence." In considering the things of this life, the work of the Riverfront Development Program is to be related to the "everyday lives of persons."

Every speaker speaks from some point of view, this evening the point of view of micro-sociology. The field of micro-sociology is a specialized field within the social sciences linking psychology and sociology. It is sometimes known

as the "sociology of small groups" or the "sociology of life styles" or the "sociology of the everyday life." The field takes its subjects from the commonplace, studying ethnic groups, families, marginal persons and communities. The micro-sociologist seeks the common activities of persons, their everyday routines of life, their common speech, and the places they hold as their own. Social scientists in this tradition are:

W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki for their Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1919),  
 C. S. Johnson for his The Negro in America (1922),  
 N. Anderson for his The Hobo: the sociology of the homeless man (1923),  
 M. Thrasher for his The Gang (1927),  
 H. W. Zorbaugh for his Gold Coast and Slum (1928),  
 E. F. Frazier for his The Negro Family in the United States (1939),  
 and W. F. Whyte for his Street Corner Society (1943).

In more recent years

E. Liebow for his Tally's Corner (1967),  
 and H. Gans for his The Urban Villagers (1962) and The Levittowners (1967).

It is no accident that the majority of these works draw their subjects from urban areas, for the urban environment, and later the metropolitan environment, generates in America a complex, dynamic and divided sociology of persons.

From these works I wish to take some premises, which have become common in describing the modern society.

- 1) Persons differ in their values.  
 (Values include the full range of likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions, principles and attitudes which influence not only our actions toward the things of this life but also the other persons in our lives.)
- 2) Persons differ in their activity patterns.  
 (Known more formally as a "division of labor", persons are separated not only by the kinds of things they do but also by the places

and times at which activities are performed.) (There are some persons we know quite well, others we know not at all. There are some places we know quite well, other places are entirely a mystery.)

- 3) Persons differ in their stock of knowledge.  
(Known more formally as a "sociology of knowledge", persons differ in their accessibility to and in retention of knowledge. Some groups of persons have been excluded from securing knowledge. There are also types of knowledge: personal acquaintance, factual knowledge, technical knowledge.)
- 4) Persons differ in their languages.  
(These languages include not only ethnic dialectics but also various sets of local urban dialectics as "street jive".)
- 5) Persons differ in their thought styles.  
(Known more formally as the "sociology of rationality", persons come to think differently such that even reasonable persons may differ on decisions regarding the same set of facts.)
- 6) These five premises have influence on the interpretation of the environments in which persons live.  
(The physical environments of the lives of persons take on a social and cultural dimension; they are said to have a "meaning" above the material nature of the environments. A home is understood to mean something more than a house and a community is understood to mean more than a sub-division.)
- 7) Finally, all of the above premises change in time.  
(Commitments to values rise or fall; desires pass, routines are altered; somethings are learned, others are forgotten; persons move in, persons move out; persons gain and lose communication; persons come to think differently; the environment changes; and generations succeed one another.)

Given all these differences and all their potential for change, it may be asked "How does the social world of persons hold together?" "How can all these divergent aspects of lives be sufficiently resolved so that a harmony of wills is effected?" Fortunately, each person is not bombarded by all these differences at each moment of life. Each person, each of us, deals with a much smaller

existence, the existence of the "everyday life".<sup>1</sup> The world of the everyday life is that world of values, experiences, knowledge, thoughts and places which we know everyday and simply "take for granted." In waking in the morning persons find that "it is just another day". And while they may be surprised, happy or sad at the events of their day, persons go off to sleep at night fully confident that the world will not be radically different at their next waking. Each person builds and unbuilds a set of expectations about the everyday world. Tomorrow mornings' oatmeal or grits will taste as bad as it always has; the school bus will be early; the car pool will be late. There will be the same potholes in the road; there will be the usual hassle to get food stamps; the electricity bill will be higher and the sewer will need to be cleaned out. And a thousand other events which are anticipated and taken as given. But above these expectations, there are also levels of trust in others and levels of confidence in ourselves. There is trust in others; the mailman will deliver the mail, teachers will teach, minister will minister and nurses will nurse. Conversely, persons have some measure of self-confidence; persons have some self-assurance in the activities of life. Persons are angry with others when trust is broken, they are angry with themselves when their confidence is shaken. There is one final level above trust and confidence, the level of "obligations". The obligation of the everyday life may be more easily understood as "promise-keeping." Whether through informal agreements as "personal promises" or through legal contracts, it is the keeping of promises that binds persons together. These four concepts: expectations, trust, self-confidence and promise-

keeping bring order to the everyday lives of persons and make possible the harmony of the wills of persons.

There are, however, some everyday lives which persons do not want for themselves and they may not wish these everyday lives for others. Regardless of the particular vocabulary, phrases of the sort "improving the quality of life", "assuring equal protection of the laws", "providing equality of opportunity", and "overcoming relative deprivation", all refer to programs of action which have the intention, and possibly the effect, of altering the everyday lives of some persons according to some set of standards. In some cases, the simple demonstration of alternatives is sufficient to encourage persons toward self-initiative and creative change in their lives. But in the majority of cases the resources for such change are outside the capability of individual persons. Human and material resources must be combined in various forms of social organization, more specifically sets of social, economic and political institutions.<sup>2</sup> It is the purpose of these institutions to provide support to or encourage change in everyday lives by the integration of some set of values, by securing a set of common experiences, by establishing a common language, by conveying a particular body of knowledge and a set of thought styles, and, in some cases, by establishing a shared physical environment. If such institutions are successful in achieving their purpose, major components of the everyday lives of persons may approach a harmony of wills. There are some institutions which are explicitly oriented toward altering the everyday lives of persons. These institutions which sponsor change are to be investigated in terms of the levels of

expectations they generate, the levels of trust they establish, the promises they make and keep, and the levels of self-confidence they instill in their participants and clientele.

This conceptual discussion now permits an analysis of the Riverfront Development Program as an institution seeking significant change in the everyday lives of persons in the metropolitan region of Omaha-Council Bluffs. Six questions may be addressed to the Riverfront Development Program (hereafter, RDP):

- 1) Has the RDP raised the expectations of persons regarding the improvement of the daily life?
- 2) Has the RDP encouraged and effected increased trust among persons?
- 3) Has the RDP kept its promises in proposing the alteration of everyday lives?
- 4) Has the RDP increased the self-confidence of persons in seeking both individual improvement and in coordinating groups of persons seeking to effect social change?
- 5) To what degree has the RDP effected a harmony of wills among persons with respect to the natural environment of the Missouri River Basin?
- 6) To what degree has the RDP effected a harmony of wills among persons with respect to the divergent social realities of the several communities of the region?

#### Analysis of the Riverfront Development Program

In order to give plausible answers to these six questions, it is necessary to examine the RDP with respect to its purposes, its structure, and, particularly, its "meaning" to different social groups.

In the summary report of the program, <sup>3</sup> the general goals of the RDP are



stated as seeking

To achieve the highest quality of life for the present and future residents of the region through rational economic, social and physical development in harmony with the human and natural environment.

An expanded statement follows, which states

The overall goal of the Missouri River Development Project is to fully utilize and realize the beauty and bounty of the River and its vicinity in order to provide an optimum total environment for man's living and working, comprehensively taking into consideration the socio-economic, cultural, recreational and ecological aspects of life. The project is intended to serve as a catalyst for development throughout the six county region. The program focuses on planning and development of projects adjacent to the River and will inhibit urban sprawl and take advantage of the unique environment and development potential of the River.

Finally, within the text, there is the statement:

Achieving the goal is obviously a major long-range undertaking requiring the collaboration of all levels of government and private enterprise with the active support of the region's citizens.

The scope of the RDP must be seen as encompassing the lives of the communities of persons within the metropolitan region in so far as the River itself becomes the locus of activity, as adjacent land uses are dedicated to commerce, industry, housing, and recreation. But the Riverfront is seen to serve more centrally as a larger cultural and aesthetic symbol, somehow binding together the persons of the Region in a common perception of their everyday lives and their possible futures.

The attainment of the RDP purpose is seen to rest upon three groups: government, private enterprise and citizens.<sup>4</sup> The work of the RDP was accomplished by an advisory committee and several task forces organized along

functional aspects. The several task forces were given decision-making power regarding inclusion of projects in the total program.<sup>5</sup> Neither the Advisory Committee of the RDP nor the Citizen's Advisory Board of the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency exercised substantive review of the projects proposals.<sup>6</sup> Despite two extensive studies on public<sup>7</sup> and neighborhood participation,<sup>8</sup> membership on the several task forces was constrained.

While the originators of the RDP wanted the activity of planning and development to keep both "exciting and controversial"<sup>9</sup> and inviting both "candor and conflict"<sup>10</sup>, it is clear that some persons were excluded in that their attitudes were not seen as "constructive"<sup>11</sup>. "What emerged is a set of task forces or, in the words of former mayor Eugene A. Leahy, a "structural assemblage of social elites" who felt "a moral and civic responsibility to correct the social and economic ills of the region."<sup>12</sup> Membership on the task forces was heavily given over to representatives of governments, social action agencies, cultural institutions, and local community organizations, together with a limited number of "concerned"<sup>13</sup> citizens. But the nature of such concern was limited to those which were seen at the outset of the activity as constructive.

Given the relative autonomy of the several task forces and their organization along specialized areas, with a majority of members having particular interests in those areas, several partially inconsistent meanings emerge in their work. The meaning of the RDP becomes divided along the several functional lines of the task forces. These divided meanings to the program emerged because the several task forces apparently did not communicate among themselves,

did not communicate with their supporting technical staffs and did not communicate with the members of the communities at large. Summarizing the analyses of three reports prepared for the RDP,<sup>14</sup> several problems were found; there was:

- high turnover in task force membership,
- failure to adhere to articulated goals,
- lack of information on critical issues,
- lack information of the RDP to local communities,  
     (what information that was available, was not prepared in a  
     manner comprehensible to the average citizen)
- lack of interchange among the several task forces,
- lack of response from agencies and MAPA regarding minority and  
     low-income citizen involvement,
- fluctuations in the levels of productivity of the task forces,
- inability of task forces to adequately monitor consultants contracts,  
     and the participation of agencies seeking to "grind their own axe"  
     and protect their own interests.

In a report prepared by the consultants from the University of Nebraska at Omaha regarding the performance of the Human Resources Task Force, the following recommendations were made, which might be extended to all task forces.

The Task Force should secure:

- stable participation of persons outside any agency so that the prejudices of institutions and agencies is overcome,
- a training program in the basic concepts of the area of concern so  
     that a common language, set of concepts and set of goals can be  
     employed,
- cross-task force participation,
- quarterly reporting of all task force activities,
- appointment of full-time staff to assist task force research,  
     and
- establishment of evaluative criteria to measure the performance of  
     task forces.

What is most striking about these several criticisms and recommendations is that the task forces did not maintain a clear understanding of the goal of the RDP

program. Given these structural and operational features, the meaning of the RDP was divided along functional lines, such that several "images" of the RDP emerge. While there might have been as many images of RDP as there were task forces, the work of three of the task forces is presented here with reference to their potential for impact on the everyday lives of persons.

a. the Riverfront Arts Council

The first of the task forces to be considered is the Riverfront Arts Council. The dominant composition of the council fell into three areas: representatives of cultural and artistic institutions, a set of practicing artists, and a set of persons in allied professions. The work of the council reflected a basic division on the nature of aesthetics as well as persistent organizational difficulties. There was no consensus on what might be called a set of aesthetic principles which might direct the design features of the RDP program as a whole. The work of the council oscillated between consideration of the performing arts and the visual arts. While the performing arts were seen to have a stronger organizational base, their position within the RDP was never clearly articulated. While the visual arts might be seen to more easily relate to the environment component of the RDP, no overall aesthetic concepts were provided by the council. It is largely through the work of their consultants that the council's work has any coherence.<sup>15</sup>

One project of the Riverfront Arts Council has generated significant controversy, the Friendship Fountain. While the notion of a fountain in the Missouri

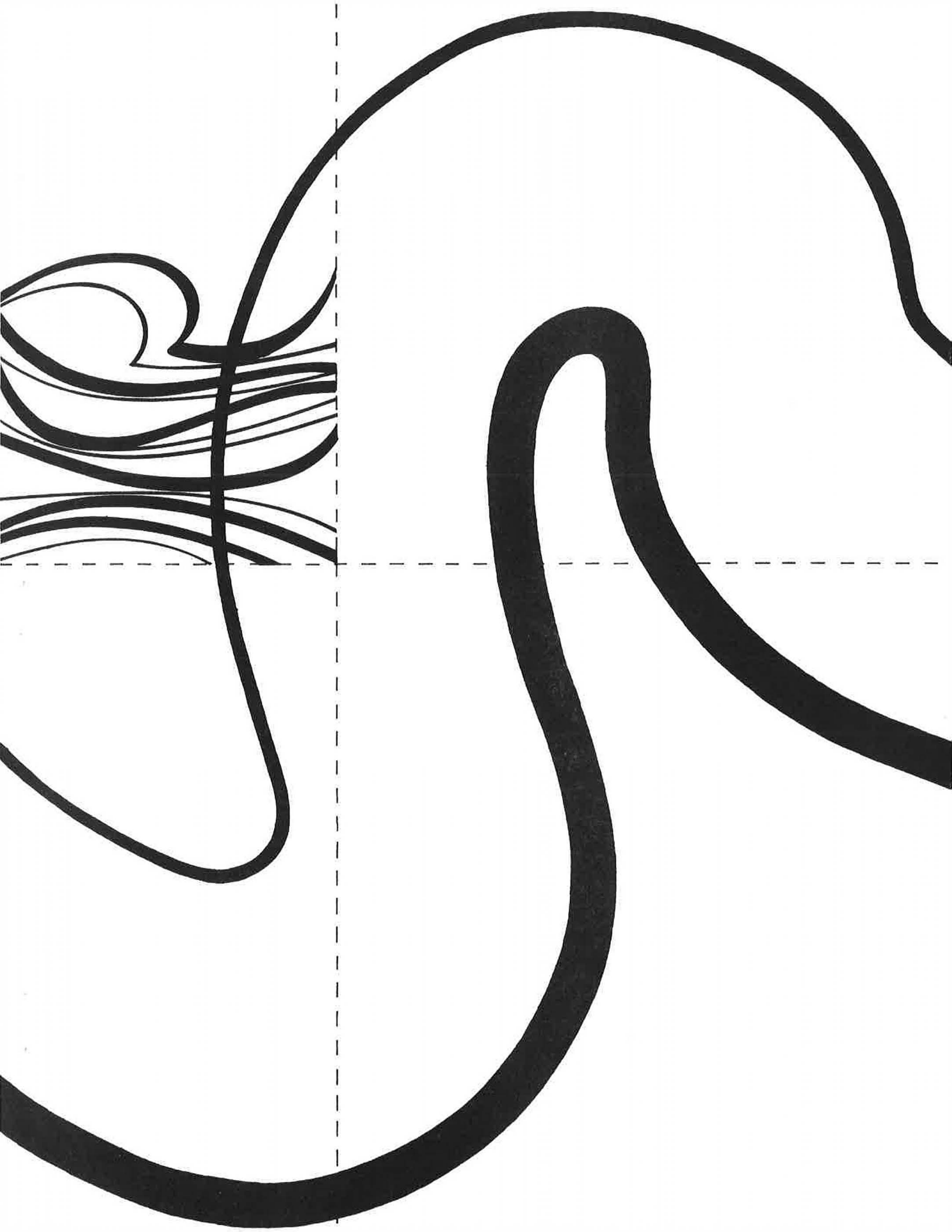
River seeking to link both sides of the river by a single aesthetic symbol is highly imaginative, given the context of the everyday life in the several communities - the persistence of potholed roads, of rat-infested alleys, of abandoned housing and of vandalized telephone booths, the Friendship Fountain project seems to violate common sense. While there may be disagreement in the aesthetic expression of the fountain, a more pragmatic opposition emerged; the fountain is seen to be a gigantic misallocation of public funds and a demonstration of insensitivity by private monied interests to the more basic needs of the region. The average citizen does not understand why monies, tax monies, granted for works of art cannot be transferred to sidewalk repair and street lighting. They see someone else getting a fountain, while they are left with broken sidewalks and dark streets. This failure to communicate the capabilities and limitations of the RDP program to the persons of the region must be borne by the leadership of the RDP, rather than any of its task forces. Yet the Riverfront Arts Council failed to grasp a basic truth which the originators of the "Sesame Street" series knew at the very start; it is possible to alter the negative perception of an inferior physical environment by accentuating the basic humanity of its residents. By endowing the character of "Oscar, the Grouch" with all-too-human qualities, a dirty garbage can is converted into a home. By altering the perceptions of the everyday environment, garbage cans can be seen as something worthy of good design. But as long as persons involved in the arts seek to design fountains because fountains are seen as worthy of design and tolerate poor design of garbage cans because garbage cans

are somehow unworthy of design, they maintain the separation between the arts and the environment and arts and the everyday life. Why is it that street lighting and traffic controls, curbing and bus stops, telephone booths and drinking fountains continue to be so poorly designed when they are so universal to the everyday lives of persons?

There is a related failure on the part of the Riverfront Arts Council; with the exception of the design consideration given to the Black Elk-Neihardt Monument and Park, there was no attempt to relate the diverse cultural origins of the communities of persons into the RDP program. There is no linkage provided among the Polish, Italian, German, Czech, Black and American Indian traditions in the RDP. It is a sad commentary, given to this Forum some weeks ago by George Nelson, that the arts are now incapable of responding to human feelings except with gigantic abstractions. Is there no other way to express and establish friendship than through such gigantic and remote instruments as the Friendship Fountain?

Despite these comments, there is yet a crucial task to be performed by the Council, the review of the entire list of RDP projects. Aesthetic review of these projects is essential if aesthetic order is to be brought to the everyday life. But this will require that the Riverfront Arts Council, now the MAPA Arts Council, reorient its activities seeking to frame a set of aesthetic principles by which to evaluate the several projects of the RDP.

b. the Sub-task Force on Minority Business Development



The second of the RDP task forces to be considered is the Economic Development Task Force, particularly its Sub-task Force on Minority Business Development. In reviewing four reports of the Sub-task force, only one deals specifically with physical redevelopment. In the study completed by Gladstone and Associates,<sup>16</sup> there is a proposal for the development of a major commercial center at the southern edge of North Omaha, seeking to link the housing proposals of the Wesley House Foundation<sup>17</sup> and the extensions of the Creighton University campus. But the emphasis of the work of this Sub-task Force was given over to recognizing problems in the organization of commercial and industrial sectors within and without the North Omaha community. Three reports prepared for the Sub-task Force demonstrated the present weaknesses in the minority business and construction sectors. In the Minority Business Opportunity report, prepared by the consultants Cunningham, Short, Berryman and Associates, the conclusions assert the need for the creation of a set of economic institutions which give support to the minority business institutions in increasing their stability, efficiency, service, and profit. In the final report submitted by the Mid-City Business and Professional Association,<sup>18</sup> it is made clear that minority businessmen have severely limited "access to the tools of capitalism - land, building, equipment, credit, capital, public relations and competent management." The report closes with certain significant recommendations of import to the image of the RDP; they are:

to secure the participation of minority businesses in the implementation of the Riverfront programs,



to seek the relocation of minority businesses into the RDP redevelopment projects, and  
 to seek the expansion of the North Omaha commercial sector to service not only basic needs of the local community but also to satisfy specific cultural preferences.

Finally, in the summary report submitted by the United Contractors Association of Nebraska,<sup>19</sup> the specific problem of the minority construction industry were examined. The recommendation of this report, like the others, lean more toward the generation of stable economic organization as a prerequisite to effective physical renewal of the communities. There were three central recommendations in this report; they are

to secure the inclusion of minority contractors in the implementation phase of the RDP,  
 to secure a special funding program, particularly bonding, for minority contractors, and  
 to enlist the support of technical and management programs to increase the competency of minority contractors.

These activities of this Sub-task Force held a different image of the RDP. It is interesting to note that the sub-title of the Gladstone Report is "Bring Riverfront to North Omaha." This report and the others prepared for the Sub-task Force to stretch the conceptual boundaries of the RDP beyond the physical renewal of the downtown to include the physical redevelopment of specific communities. Jurisdictionally the boundaries of the RDP are no longer "adjacent to the Riverfront" but are extended at least to 30th Street. Despite this stretching of both concepts and boundaries, it is clear the recommendations of the Sub-task Force do seek to effect an improvement of the everyday life of persons whose participation in the present economic life of the community is severely constrained. Commercial redevelopment in North Omaha would offer its

residents, particularly those residents of the three nearby public housing projects, greater accessibility to satisfactory commodities and services within their limited budgets. But the more significant proposals made by the Sub-task Force are those which are non-physical in nature. By effecting a set of educational programs seeking to train minority businessmen and construction managers, there is the increased potential for the generation of a stable, responsive and profit-making minority commercial and industrial sector. If adequately implemented, these recommendations can have a significant impact upon the everyday lives in the North Omaha communities as well as improving the performance of the regional economy in general.

#### c. the Human Resources Task Force

A third image of the RDP was developed in the work of the Human Resources Task Force. While previous comments have pointed out certain inadequacies in performance, the Human Resources Task Force has been one of the most productive and one which effected a broad public involvement. Four reports of this Task Force will be considered here; the most significant of these reports is the North Omaha Culture and Recreation study.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction of this study, the Task Force opened with a quotation which exposed a basic flaw in the conceptualization of the Riverfront Program, the statement reads:

So common is the identification of leisure and recreation with "going somewhere" and "spending money" that the lack of money clearly excludes the family with low income from many outside possibilities and associations.

While many of the RDP proposals are public projects to be operated with no user charge, there are nevertheless significant transportation costs associated with the use of such facilities. For the low income family such costs may be disproportionately high relative to their budget. For a significant number of persons; for the very young, the very old, and the handicapped, accessibility to the Riverfront is severely constrained. In a very real sense, they cannot make "a return to the River." If accessibility to the Riverfront and use of its adjacent facilities is so constrained, the Riverfront cannot operate as a successful cultural symbol linking the everyday lives of persons. What emerged in the work of the Human Resources Task Force was an alternative development strategy. The task Force asserted a rather simple but significant principle: In economically depressed communities, where user charges constrain the use of commercial recreation facilities and where transportation costs constrain the use of distant public recreation facilities, the dependence of the community upon public local recreation facilities is radically increased. The Human Resources Task Force eventually recommended seven proposals for facilities which are largely dedicated to local recreation, particularly for use by younger age groups. The Human Resources Task Force, like the Sub-task Force on Minority Business Development, extended the conceptual model of Riverfront to include the "impacted communities" which display "certain social and economic ills" and extended the jurisdictional boundaries of the RDP, again to 33rd Street.

In a report prepared by Neil Astle and Associates for the Human Resources

Task Force,<sup>21</sup> the diverse social counseling needs of a pluralistic clientele in Council Bluffs were analyzed in terms of the geographic distribution of persons.

In order to serve the needs of the ADC family, the elderly, the blind and the handicapped with convenience, three facilities were proposed within the City of Council Bluffs. Again, the conceptual model of RDP was extended to cover a broad range of human services to persons having neither reason nor capability to make "a return to the River." Jurisdictionally, the boundaries of the RDP were extended to Fifth Street in Council Bluffs.

The general orientation of the Human Resources Task Force seems to have been to make several recommendations on facilities which would later provide a broad range of programs related to health, guidance, counseling, education and associated human services.<sup>22</sup> But the work of this task force had two serious flaws. First, its proposals for facilities were not accompanied by an overall program for the integration and cooperation of social action activities. There was no indication of manpower requirements, staff competencies, institutional processes, liaison requirements and coordinated operating budgets. While the RDP may be able to construct the several physical facility proposals, there is little assurance that agencies of government, quasi-public social action agencies and private social service groups can adequately and efficiently operate such facilities. There is no social action programs which is parallel to the physical facilities construction program. The second weakness of the Human Resources Task Force is the spotty attention given to the cultural

diversity of the region. With the exception of the York Park study<sup>23</sup> and the expansion study for the Chicano Awareness Center,<sup>24</sup> the Human Resources Task Force did not relate questions of human development to the cultural backgrounds of persons. The Human Resources Task Force altered the image of the RDP so as to be of greater and more direct service to specific communities of persons, but the concept of the Riverfront is now so emorphous that it cannot operate as a cultural symbol in the everyday lives of persons.

d. the Missouri River Corridor Land Use Plan and Program

Given these divergent images of the RDP by the Task Forces, there is a question as to whether the RDP can be considered a program of action. If the term program is to mean an interrelated set of projects sufficient to secure some predetermined objective, the RDP summary report<sup>25</sup> is inadequate. In the Forward of this report, there is a particularly significant statement:

It is not the intent of this land use plan and program to evaluate the objectives and programs of the task forces or to test their feasibility. These functions of evaluations and testing were performed by the task force (sic) and the consultants who recommended them.

Yet in three RDP sponsored reports,<sup>26</sup> there is some indication that the several task forces did not adhere to articulated goals, did not sufficiently monitor consultant contracts, did not perform sufficient research, did not evaluate their own performances, and most significantly did not communicate their proposals to other task forces. The final report may be a land use plan but it is not a program in the sense of an interrelated set of projects sufficiently integrated

to effect an improvement in the quality of life. While the report is said to be a "working tool", there is no statement as to how the several project proposals fit together as a coherent whole. If a program is to be called a program, it must have a demonstrable logic. At best the summary document is a "shopping list" for facilities, seeking to address several specific problems of the region. It is a very seductive shopping list in that priorities are assigned and there appear to be several "bargain prices", in that the federal government, state government or local public funding sources may pay some percentage of the projected prices. What is then encouraged is a "conspicuous consumption" on the part of the citizens, in that they are to believe that they are getting a bargain by supporting the RDP. If the metaphor of the "shopping list" is appropriate, then the metaphor of a "recipe" may also be appropriate. When persons shop for commodities, they purchase commodities to fulfill the requirements of specific recipes. In the summary document of the RDP, there is no recipe, there has been no "kitchen-tasting", there is suspicion that its products may turn-out "half-baked." As a metaphor the "Riverfront" may carry with it as many meanings as persons; but as a concept which is to guide public policy, the Riverfront must have a single, definitive meaning which stipulates a set of interrelated projects sufficient to effect the original purpose.

In the Executive Summary of the same report, Mayor Zorinsky is quoted from his position paper of April 9, 1975. A portion of that quotation displays the two major flaws of the entire RDP effort. The Mayor stated:

A program of this type is not universally popular because its complexity is not easy to understand and because of present life styles.

If the RDP is not popular because it is not understood, it is because the RDP has not generated the mechanisms by which it could be understood. But beyond the failure to communicate is the insensitivity to the divergent life styles of persons. It is clear that the RDP never attempted to grasp the significance of the everyday lives of persons. It should come as no surprise then that the persons of the region find little meaning in the images of the Riverfront.

### Conclusions

At the opening of this paper four concepts were presented as prerequisite to the harmony of the wills of persons. Six questions were also addressed to the RDP; by employing these concepts, the several questions may be answered. Whatever the limitations of the RDP, it has altered the expectations of some persons within the several communities of this region. The units of government, the social service and social action agencies, the private enterprise institution, the local community organizations and various individuals have, by their participation in the RDP, made promises to the persons of the communities in soliciting their trust in developing the overall plan and program. The persons of the region have trusted that the RDP will at least improve, if not optimize, the quality of their lives. If those expectations are frustrated, if those promises are broken, if that trust is violated, the future of the region may be placed in jeopardy. Failure to implement the RDP could have serious

consequences for the political order of the region in two related dimensions. First, certain administrations may become discredited by the electorate, generating divisiveness and inaction within the several units of government. Secondly, and of greater impact, is that the support of the electorates for limited regional, intergovernmental coordination may sour. Cooperation among cities and counties may be abandoned in favor of a more self-seeking program of action. The potential consequences to social service and action agencies are equally odious. If these social institutions fail to implement the RDP, they may find that their supporting constituencies and clienteles will question their legitimacy. Social institutions exist on the basis of trust; if these institutions become distrusted, they will be unable to perform any constructive service within the region. If local community leaders fail to implement RDP, their credibility as leaders may be questioned. If the leadership of a local organization fails, the entire organization may be threatened. The private enterprise sector, now seeing that units of government are unstable in their commitments, that social service agencies are incapable of providing service, and that local community groups have failed, may withdraw their commitment because of fear that the risks are too great. The greatest loss, however, will be borne by the persons of the region; in losing confidence in their government, in their institutions, in their local community and in the economic order, they may lose confidence in themselves. The everyday lives of persons become lives of "quiet desperation"; "the city of persons" will have no peace. The central conclusion of this paper must be, to reassert the principle stated by former mayor Eugene A. Leahy,



that the RDP is now under a "moral and civic obligation to fulfill its promises." In that the RDP has altered the expectations of persons in the region and has solicited their trust, the RDP has already altered the perceptions of the everyday lives of persons.

### Recommendations

Some recommendations may be drawn from the discussion which may be of service to the RDP as it moves from planning to implementation.

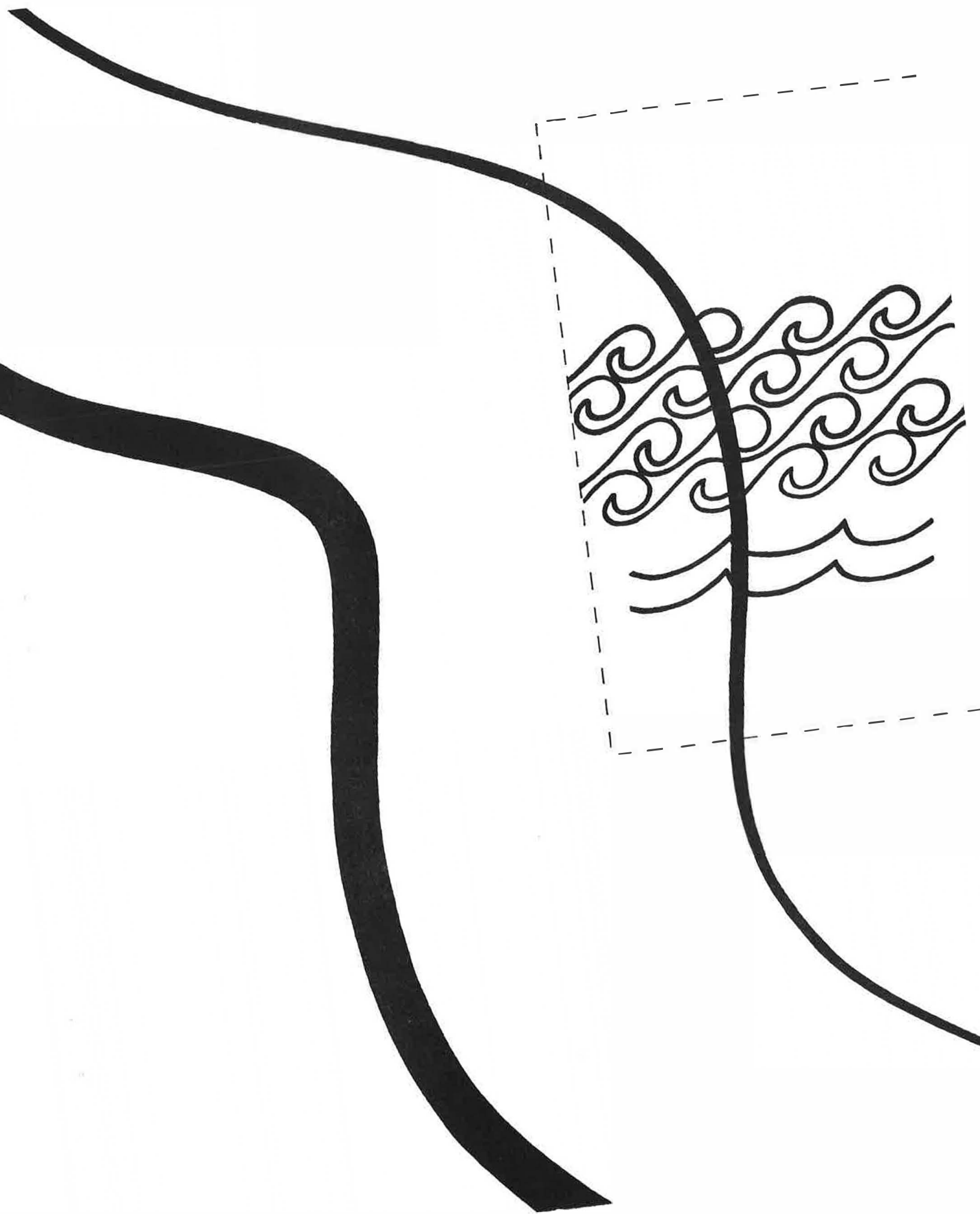
- 1) The present summary document, the Missouri Riverfront Corridor Land Use Plan and Program, should be withdrawn and rewritten. The rewritten version should carry two additional sections, the first of which should be a conceptual argument which demonstrates the logical relations between the program goals and the specific project proposals. The second section should investigate the relationships among the several projects for compatibility. The entire document should be written in a vocabulary which is comprehensible to the several communities of persons.
- 2) A second document should be prepared parallel to the first which will carry the summary of the social action programs needed to effect the non-physical recommendations of the several task forces. Community counseling programs, workshops in recreation, educational programs in business management, training programs in construction and in construction management, aesthetic education programs, and human resources seminars need some overall structure in order to provide informed and competently trained persons to implement the RDP.
- 3) The organization which is to implement the RDP should avoid the functionally specific task force structure of the RDP. The success of RDP implementation will rest not only upon the ability of the several units of government to sponsor projects within their jurisdiction but also upon the coordinated, phased realization of interrelated projects. While several of the projects will require specialization to secure implementation, there must be some central, coordinating structure to make certain that the parts are implemented with sympathy for the whole. Representation on this central coordinating

structure should be as broad as possible; only a minority of members should be representatives of units of government, social agencies and private enterprise institutions.

- 4) The MAPA Arts Council should be given power of review and commentary over all projects within the RDP. Prior to such review of specific projects, however, the council should be required to develop and publish the set of aesthetic principles by which it shall judge the several projects.
- 5) A special organization should be established which would serve the dual purpose of providing relevant and comprehensible information to the several communities on implementation activities of RDP and, in turn, convey to the implementing agencies of RDP the responses of the communities to such activities. This organization should serve an ombudsman function within the RDP, encouraging debate of RDP implementation activities and questioning the validity of implementation processes.
- 6) Where possible, the projects of the RDP should be broken down into "pilot projects" (as the proposal for the modernization for the Logan-Fontennele Homes) so that local impacts may be assessed before irreversible negative consequences must be borne by a local community.
- 7) Wherever possible, RDP projects should be broken down into sets of discrete tasks and activities which can be implemented by small groups of persons and with minimal requirements of technical expertise. This may place great stress upon the coordinating committee of the program; but, if Riverfront is to be at all successful, it must involve persons in actual projects at their own levels of skill.
- 8) Most needed is a special organization to critically evaluate the performance of the RDP implementation processes. In that the projects proposed by the RDP will take several years to realize, there must be a means by which the program for implementation can be critically revised and specific proposals adjusted to account for changing circumstances and public aspiration. This review panel is needed, for there may be as much to learn from the mistakes of RDP as from its successes.

1. The concept of the "everyday life" was formulated by the German phenomenologic sociologist Alfred Schutz, Collected Papers, Volume I (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962). A basic discussion appears in P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (New York: Doubleday, 1967); two anthologies consider the various aspects of the art of study: G. Psathas, Phenomenological Sociology (New York: Wiley Inter-Science, 1973) and J. Bensman and R. Lilienfeld, Craft and Consciousness (New York: Wiley Inter-Science, 1973).
2. For discussion of the nature and function of institutions within a society see A. Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).
3. Missouri Riverfront Corridor Land Use Plan and Program, Henningson, Durham and Richardson, Inc., 1975, RDP-02-020.
4. Comments made by Eugene A. Leahy at the Mid-Continent Research and Development Council 22nd Annual Conference, Omaha, September 22, 1975. (Hereafter the conference will be referred to as MCRDCC). It is interesting to note that Mr. Leahy made no mention of the various forms of social institutions which mediate between groups of citizens and other sectors of the polity and economy; specifically the social service agencies, both public and quasi-public, which came to play such a dominant role in certain task force activities.
5. Comments made by Pat Pendergrass at the MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
6. Comments made by Robert M. Oberman, Vice-Chairman, Citizen Advisory Board, MAPA, at the MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
7. Riverfront Development Program: Public Participation, Sub-element 1400, Greater Omaha Community Action, Inc., 1974, RDP-01-002.
8. Neighborhood Program Development and Planning, Sub-element 301, Cunningham, Short and Berryman, 1973, RDP-01-011.
9. Comments made by Eugene A. Leahy at the MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
10. Comments made by Michael B. Yanney, Chairman, RDP, at the MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
11. Comments made by Pat Pendergrass at MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
12. Comments made at MCRDCC, September 22, 1975.
13. Neighborhood Program Development and Planning.

14. Support Services, Training and Technical Assistance, Sub-element B-302, Greater Omaha Community Action, Inc., RDP-02-001; Public Participation, Sub-element 1400, Greater Omaha Community Action, Inc., RDP-01-002; and Neighborhood Development Priorities, Division of Training and Community Service, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Sub-element B-301-01, RDP-02-008.
15. The draft of the study was presented by the responsible staff of Wilsey/Ham Associates at the Riverfront Forum, Joslyn Art Museum, September 11, 1975.
16. Commercial Development Potentials, "Bringing the Riverfront to North Omaha", Gladstone and Associates, Sub-element B-708.01, RDP-02-007.
17. Housing Feasibility Plan, Sub-element 301-03, Real Estate Research Corporation, RDP-02-010.
18. RDP Final Report, Sub-element B-703, RDP-02-002.
19. Ucan RDP Final Report, Sub-element C-708.03, RDP-03-002.
20. North Omaha: Culture and Recreation, Community Design Center of Omaha, Sub-element B-308, RDP-01-013.
21. Facility Planning, Omaha-Council Bluffs Family Service, Sub-element C-301.08, RDP-03-006.
22. Neighborhood Development Priorities.
23. York Park, Community Design Center of Omaha, Sub-element 301.05.
24. The Chicano Awareness Center, Ambrose Jackson Associates, Sub-element S. E. C-301.09, RDP REP-03-007.
25. Missouri Riverfront Corridor Land Use Plan and Program.
26. See Note 14.



### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - Niel Johnson

Niel Johnson is an historian with an undergraduate degree from Augustana College and the M. A. and Ph. D. degrees from the University of Iowa. He has been a campus newspaper correspondent, display advertising salesman and layout designer, a public school teacher, an historian for the U. S. Army Weapons Command and held college teaching positions at Augustana and Dana Colleges before coming to UNO as a visiting professor.

His publications include Portal to the Plains (an illustrated history of Washington County, Nebraska), and he is organizer and President of Portal of the Plains, Inc., a non-profit organization.

While a native of Illinois, Dr. Johnson has had a keen interest in local Nebraska history and has been involved in numerous projects relating to Nebraska history and the preservation of its artifacts.

HELPING OMAHA CAPITALIZE ON ITS HERITAGE  
(OR THE HISTORY-BENEFIT RATIO)

by Niel Johnson

One of the things I have heard mentioned in these forums is that the Riverfront program, to succeed, must be fun. That is, it must offer opportunities for the people to enjoy themselves. I wish to be counted in as one who supports that view. And I believe that we have, in this program, the opportunity to do something that will offer enjoyment and education in the same package. The ideas I have to offer concern both the package and its contents. To be more specific, I hope to show that the residents and neighbors of Omaha can become part of a program to make local history something that is attractive and appealing to them and to visitors from outside.

It is my contention that there are interesting and even fascinating things about the history of the Omaha area and that they should be presented in a way that would draw considerable attention and an appreciable number of visitors. I would also contend that other cities have done some exemplary things with their river-

fronts -- not just commercially -- but in making them more aesthetic or beautiful and more meaningful historically -- both in the same process. I suggest that we might learn something useful from these examples.

The Riverfront Foundation, I notice, has published a study subtitled PARKS, RECREATION AREAS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN, 1973. The plan says that historic sites and structures "collectively narrate the story of the area and so are of great interest to the tourists." It mentions the great importance of the Missouri River in the development of the midwest and Plains region. It concludes that many local historic sites "contain valuable manmade resources whose significance will continue to increase with the passage of time."

The study also includes a historical map and chart of the area from Blair on the north to Plattsmouth on the south. The chart that goes with it summarizes or capsulizes a good deal of local history along the river. That is a beginning. I hope that more can be, and will be done.

Perhaps some of you already have dollar signs popping up in your heads. But I want to save the worst to last. Actually, what I have to propose is downright modest, and I believe definitely realistic, in the financial sense.

But first, let us deal with the enjoyment-education ratio or the historic-benefit ratio, and then we can take a look at the cost-benefit or financial ratios.

My main concern for the next few minutes is the less tangible, but humanistic values of helping people enjoy and appreciate the past and helping them understand how Omaha and its neighbor communities came to be what they are. I think that the ability to identify with events and personalities of the past helps give more



meaning to the present.

Perhaps we think that civic pride is important; if so, we should acknowledge that learning to take pride in our past makes it easier to feel proud of what we are now and what we might become. Patrick Henry is reported to have said: "I know of no way to judge the future except by the past." I have also heard it said that a community without a past is like a person without a memory.

Okay--let's assume that more concern and knowledge about the past are healthy for a community. That still does not tell us how much it's worth. Well, I hope that what I have to say and show will help us answer that question. Of course, worth is like a cut jewel. It has many facets. Certainly, among the most important are the intellectual and emotional benefits.

In exploring the possibilities of making our heritage a source of enjoyment and enlightenment, let's look first at Omaha's location. City boosters back in the 1920's referred to Omaha as the "Crossroads of the Nation" and "The City Surrounded by the United States." Looking at a map of the country, we do find that Omaha along with Kansas City are the most centrally located of all the major cities in the United States. Another older title applied to Omaha has been the "Gateway to the West," but this kind of label has been applied to Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, and possibly other cities. Perhaps, St. Louis has the best claim. At least they have done more than any other city to capitalize on it -- with their gateway arch and associated riverfront beautification.

To be frank, Omaha's location may be considered disadvantageous as far as tourism is concerned. Both Omaha and Nebraska have been, for too many

travelers, a place to get through, either on their way to the mountains or on their way home.

Still, there are a couple of factors that could work in Omaha's favor. First, we are on a main east-west artery, I-80. On an average day in 1974 a total of 2,750 cars and other noncommercial vehicles from out of state passed east or west through Omaha on I-80. And other hundreds go north and south, just across the river, on I-29. Presumably, many of them stop here or nearby for motel accommodations. Many travelers from Chicago, for instance, might find a 500-mile drive enough in one day; that would bring them into Omaha's orbit. And why could we not get travelers from Kansas City -- especially if they are tired of repeated trips to the Ozarks and want somewhere beside St. Louis and Tulsa to go in an easy half-day drive? It might not be easy to get a Colorado-bound family to spend a day in Omaha, but I believe that for some it can be done.

To some extent it is being done. The state's Department of Economic Development reports that in 1974 the number of out-of-state visitors to Boys Town reached 104,000, along with 27,000 at the Aerospace Museum, and 13,500 at the Union Pacific Museum. Total attendance at these places plus the Henry Doorly Zoo, the Joslyn Art Museum, and Fort Atkinson historical park amounted to approximately 750,000 -- three-quarters of a million. This figure is impressive but I am convinced that we are far from reaching our full potential.

Apparently, we also are finding many urban and rural tourists who are looking closer to home for places to visit. This has been a result of rising fuel prices. Perhaps many of these people within a two or three hundred mile radius

could be enticed to Omaha if we could show them something special and unique that is relevant to Omaha's history. I believe they could be entertained, as well as enlightened, by proper and imaginative displays.

Perhaps a high-rise fountain in the river would be unique. That happens to be an issue that I will not get into. I will focus my concern and ideas on projects that would symbolize and personify relevant and important historical events in the development of this area.

Let me review briefly those events, personalities, and places that have made history in the local area and which could be the subject of exhibits and displays.

First, we have the Omaha and Oto Indian tribes who claimed this land for over a century. We also have evidence in the hills north of Omaha of the Nebraska Culture Indians who flourished about four hundred years ago. The period of French and Spanish influence lasted from about 1780 to the early 1800's. There was a Frenchman living with the Otoes just west of Omaha when Lewis and Clark passed the Omaha site in 1804.

Certainly, we must take note of two of the world's greatest explorers, Lewis and Clark. I have an idea about how to do it which I will explain a little bit later.

Then we have Manuel Lisa, the most important trader on the Missouri River until his death in 1820. He built a post just a few miles north of the present-day Omaha in 1812. About the same time another trader build a post south of us near the mouth of the Platte River. In the early 1820's the American Fur Company erected a trading post at the mouth of Ponca Creek where an entrance to Hummel Park is now located. It came under the management of Cabanne. In 1831 George

Catlin painted a picture showing the post; he stood just north of where the Mormon Bridge now stands. Recently, I acquired a black and white print of the painting. Here is a slide of it -- showing the post in the far background.

Two years later, in 1833, the painter Karl Bodmer and Prince Maximillian stopped overnight at Cabanne's. The Prince described the scene as he, Bodmer, and Cabanne sat on the balcony of the trader's house and watched about twenty Omaha Indians dance around a bonfire to the beat of drums. Maximillian wrote, "they leaped up with both feet at once, not rising high from the ground, and stamped loudly, while the drum beat in quick time, and their arms rattled and occasionally lifted up into the air..." Since no illustration of this event exists, I painted a picture that in at least a crude way depicts that idyllic setting.

It was also in the 1820's that the U.S. Army built Fort Atkinson just north of Omaha, the largest fort in the country at the time. The government also sent out a scientific party under Major Stephen Long. Fortunately, artists Charles Seymour and Titian Peale accompanied Long's platoon. Seymour's painting of the Council with the Pawnees in 1819 gives us our first eyewitness picture of troops from Fort Atkinson. Peale also painted the first picture ever made of a plains Indian tepee near Long's camp which was just north of the large quarry pond on the road along the bluff north of Hummel Park. Peale also painted what is probably the only authentic illustration of the first steamboat to successfully ascend the Missouri River, the Western Engineer. In the fall of 1819 it chugged past the future site of Omaha.

A local history buff and model maker, Miss A. M. Meyer, has constructed a

small replica of that boat which we see here. The first regular steamboat service did not start until 1831 when the newly built Yellowstone steamed its way up the Missouri into the Dakotas.

Meanwhile, in 1825 General Atkinson decided that the large keelboats in use at the fort would be made more efficient by substituting paddlewheels for rowing, poling, or pulling from shore. He converted several boats this way, and here we have a painting of how one of them probably looked. About 40 soldiers pushed handrails that turned a big flywheel which in turn rotated the big paddlewheels.

Clearly, Omaha is the site of many significant early developments in western river transportation.

Because of our nearness to Lewis and Clark's Council Bluff, to Long's winter camp, to Cabanne's post, and to Fort Atkinson, we also have connections with many of the early great explorations in the West. Somehow I think we could make these facts become more alive and meaningful to today's generation.

One idea I have to accomplish this objective is a suggestion that Omaha build a full-scale replica of Lewis and Clark's keelboat. I have given this idea considerable study. Here are illustrations of the boat that are based on original sources. Meriwether Lewis, who was Jefferson's personal secretary, designed the craft. My first picture is of a drawing made by William Clark himself in 1804. He noted that the boat was 55 feet long, about 8 feet wide at the middle, and 7 feet high. His drawing and other data tell us that it had a row of lockers on the inside of the gunwales, which when closed, provided a walkway for polers who literally walked the boat against the current or rowed with oars.

This drawing that I made for a brochure shows the boat with these oars.

This drawing was made by Alton Larsen for a booklet, Portal to the Plains, a history of Washington County which we published last year.

Again, in Omaha, we are fortunate enough to have two fine scale models. The Smithsonian, by the way, has only one model of a river keelboat of this period -- a barge used on the Mississippi around 1812. Here it is.

Locally, here is a model made by Miss Meyer who has given us a colorful reproduction of the boat.

And here we have one made by Ted Boganowski of the Corps of Engineers. He made the other boat models you may have seen in the Corps' Building.

This is an excellent small-scale replica, even including figures made of kneaded eraser. It was sent on a tour of the Missouri River dams where visitors will be able to view it now and during the Bicentennial year.

Here is a drawing I have made of how the boat might look in full scale, as a museum display. A catwalk would allow visitors to get a closer look at the interior of the boat. Perhaps, a few lockers with glass lids could be used to display typical personal items and garments of the crewmen who manned the boat. Most of them were Frenchmen. We should also include a panel and case with artifacts, documents, and paintings to interpret the expedition for the visitor.

One type of illustration that would certainly be appropriate is this painting by Alton Larsen showing the famous meeting of Lewis and Clark with the Otoe and Missouri Indians at Council Bluffs. This is the same site where Fort Madison was later built, just to the east of the present town of Fort Calhoun.

The boat's large square sail was used as a canopy or umbrella for this meeting. There we had the first official council between the federal government and the Indians of the Plains. It became the model for subsequent councils along the Missouri.

For an estimated cost of 40 to 50,000 dollars we could get a full-scale replica of the boat and an interpretive panel and case. This project, because of its uniqueness and because of nationwide interest in Lewis and Clark, would undoubtedly attract favorable attention from around the country. I would not be surprised if the National Geographic Society would take a special interest in the project. It has collaborated with me in providing some drawings and data.

Along with the keelboat, Omaha should do something special to capitalize on the fact that here is the place from where the first transcontinental railroad started. Omaha probably gets more mentions in history books for this fact than for any other reason. The Union Pacific has a museum which was visited by 27,000 people in each of the last two years. I think this is only a fraction of what its appeal would be if it were situated in a more convenient and more conspicuous location.

This comment brings me to a very important point. This concerns the plan to convert the Union Pacific depot into a Western Heritage Museum. I have studied the proposal and compared it with what other cities have done or are doing. I have also inventoried, in a rough way, local historical projects that exist or are presently underway. As a way of putting the Western Heritage idea into perspective, let us note briefly what attractions we now have and then take a glance at

what some other cities are doing.

In such facilities as the Joslyn Art Museum and the Bellevue Aerospace Museum, we have some excellent historical displays. The same goes for Freedom Park. But they are special purpose facilities, and none of them is a general historical museum. The Aerospace Museum, by the way, attracted 60,000 visitors last year, and the Joslyn drew over 100,000. Also in the planning stage is a Great Plains Black Museum in north Omaha. Upriver, the government is planning a major project to display the cargo of the Bertrand steamboat. And work is underway on the Black Elk-Neilhardt Monument and park on the bluffs above Blair. Here we have two slides showing the nature of that project. It will symbolize the spiritual heritage of Black Elk and the plains tribes-- and of his hopes for compassion and mutual respect among all nations and races. It will emphasize a belief in the essential spiritual unity of all men.

Across the river we have the very impressive Dodge House. Here in Omaha we can expect the birthplace of President Ford to be marked by a suitable monument. We also should not overlook the significance of the Mormon cemetery in Florence that commemorates the courage and suffering of the Mormon emigrants on the trail to Utah in 1846-47. And how about the sculptures for I-80? Will they not draw thousands of the curious to Nebraska?

Yes, things are happening in this area -- in the matter of celebrating our heritage. And yet there is one thing missing -- and that is a structure that could house and protect large artifacts such as a railroad locomotive, a trolley, automobiles -- or even a keelboat -- and which could serve as a central place for



a comprehensive presentation of our total heritage. The emphasis should probably be on transportation, what better shelter and exhibit area than the massive and adaptable Union Pacific depot?

Let us take a quick look at what other cities have done. Pittsburgh in recent years has done some marvelous things, both in beautifying its riverfront and in putting its history on display. Here we have a view of the Golden Triangle -- once a jungle of railroad tracks and warehouses. Look at it today-- a beautiful sight. Along with beautification, the Pittsburghers marked out the old Fort Duquesne site, rebuilt a rampart of Fort Pitt of the 1760's, and constructed a museum next to the Fort Pitt site.

Another view shows the top of the rampart with its cannon facing downriver-- toward Three Rivers Stadium. Why it is aimed that way is not clear, unless someone knows there are pirates in that direction.

North of the stadium stands another example of the Pittsburghers pride and concern about their heritage. A few years ago a plan was underway for demolition of the old Post Office, a very imposing structure in the Greco-Roman style, and surmounted by a beautiful large dome. At any rate, Pittsburgh citizens banded together, saved the building, and collected \$700,000 to convert the structure into a museum. Among other things, it houses a collection of remnants of other historic structures that have been destroyed to make way for new buildings. Today it is the center of a whole block of beautiful park space and refurbished structures.

In Nashville, Tennessee, a city the size of Omaha, there has not been much

riverfront beautification. But interested citizens have constructed on the river near downtown a full-scale replica of Fort Nashborough -- the original settlement from which the city grew. Nashville citizens have also preserved and restored an Old South mansion -- the Belle Meade plantation house and out-buildings. It has been a major and apparently successful project. And perhaps we are familiar with the city's full-scale replica of the Greek Parthenon.

Further west, on the Missouri and Mississippi, the city of St. Louis symbolized its historical role in the building of a great arch -- the Gateway to the West. Beneath it stands another remarkable symbol and reverent relic of the past -- a one hundred and fifty-year old church, and the Old Statehouse. This project certainly had its detractors, and yet it was done. And what a marvelous monument it is -- great and appropriate symbol.

Closer to Omaha, we arrive at Kansas City. It, too, claims ties to the West-- particularly as the starting point of the Santa Fe and Oregon trails. What is particularly relevant here is a plan to renovate the great Union station, a small part of which is now being used as a restaurant, and convert it into a museum of science and technology. Kansas Citians are expecting to invest \$25 million in this project. This compares to the \$2 million that the Western Heritage Society needs to produce a first-class educational and entertaining historical museum in the Union Pacific depot. And next door to Kansas City, near Independence, we find a major reconstruction in old Fort Osage on the Missouri. In addition, Jackson County since 1963 has been erecting a complete village called "Missouri Town 1855." Fort Osage draws over a quarter of a million people each year, and

Missouri Town 1855 is visited by more than 50,000.

Getting back to Omaha, I am one of those who is concerned that all classes and groups of people be considered in the Riverfront program. And I believe that appropriate conversion and use of the Union Pacific Depot will serve the interest of all social levels. It certainly should feature, besides the things I have mentioned, the contributions of the many ethnic and immigrant groups that have made this city what it is. Museum planners should collaborate closely with the Joslyn Art Museum, with the leaders of the Omaha tribe, the Mormon's, the Czech and other historical and ethnic societies. It is certainly significant that the Union Pacific probably will transfer its museum collection to the new facility if the conversion work is carried through. The Union Pacific is a name familiar throughout the country, and its collections are very valuable (\$300,000 according to one appraisal).

The proposed museum should charge only a modest admission fee. And that is in their plans. Besides its appeal to the adult population, it would provide unprecedented opportunities for school children in this area to observe and participate in many valuable and fascinating experiences associated with the generations that built the foundations of this community and region. The Society's report shows that it recognizes the exciting opportunities to present a broad and flexible display of collections out of Omaha's past, to include autos, trolleys, coins, radios, and other such artifacts. It also envisions activities that will make the center "open, dynamic, and participatory." Such an approach, the reports states, will appeal to a broad audience, spanning "all ages, backgrounds and

tastes in Omaha. "

Besides the things already mentioned, it would be my hope that we could somehow include in the exhibits an appropriate reminder of the trial of Standing Bear in 1879 at Fort Omaha. It was this court that for the first time explicitly asserted that the Indian was a person under the law and equally deserving of its protection. It was one of the few instances in which an Indian won his case in court. Dorothy Parke Wilson has dramatized this event in her book, Bright Eyes, published about three years ago.

On a more mundane level, we might find ways in a museum to represent the economic "firsts" and "greatests" in this area -- to include the Union Stockyards, one of the world's largest; the lead smelter that once was the country's largest; and of butter production in which Omaha was a leader. I understand that Omaha also was once a leading center for horse trading. Speaking of horses, the museum should give recognition to Aksarben and its civic projects.

Now we come to that golden question -- will the proposed museum be a tax burden? I think not. The Western Heritage society's plan carries a conservative estimate of 30,000 paying visitors in the first year of operation, increasing to 75,000 in the third year. Add to that a small profit from a sales operation and the receipt of modest private, federal, and state grants. What remains would be something less than \$100,000 deficit that the city of Omaha would hopefully make up. That would amount to about \$1.00 per family taxpayer per year in Omaha. All of this money would go toward meeting total operating and maintenance costs of about \$240,000 per year, by the third year of operation. I can't help but think

that a region of a half a million people, and other hundreds of thousands stopping here each year, has more than adequate resources to support such a plan.

The immediate need is \$2 million, which would cover the cost of complete restoration and preservation of the building, and the cost of acquiring and mounting all the exhibits and displays envisioned for the building. The city government has decided to provide the nearly \$700,000 required for complete restoration and repair of the building when the other \$1.3 million have been obtained from other sources. I understand that efforts are underway to procure donations and gifts for that purpose.

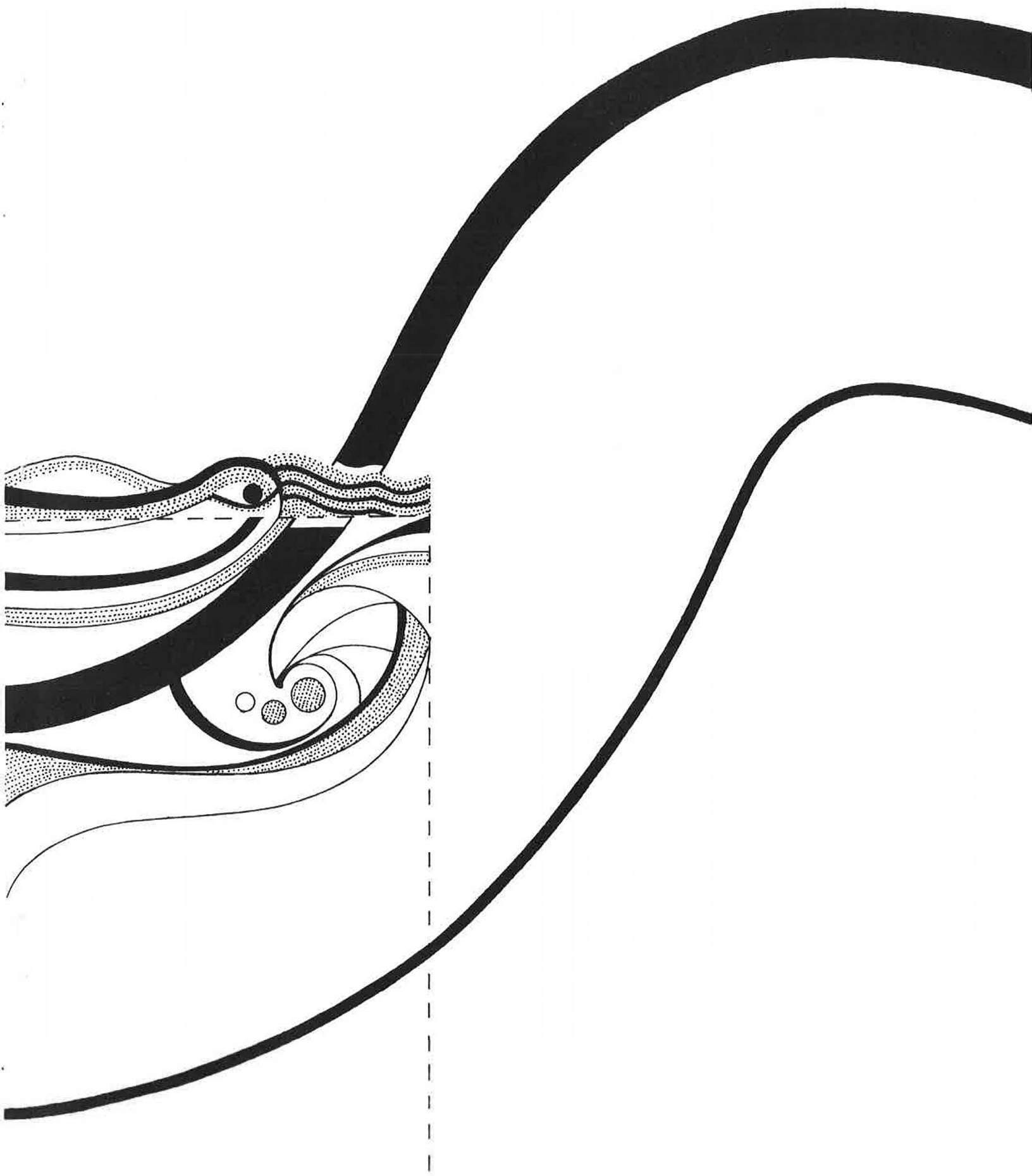
Getting tourists and local people to visit and use the museum facility depends in part on proper promotion and publicity, and upon good management. Most of all, it depends upon the quality and uniqueness of the displays and programs themselves. Is it not possible to envision general public interest in such things as a locomotive, trolley car, and a Lewis and Clark keelboat, along with accessories and with many activity-oriented booths and displays geared for all age groups?

Economic recession can be used as an excuse to draw back from new projects. Certainly we must be concerned for bread on the table. And yet we don't live by bread alone, and we don't live well if we live in isolation either from others or from our past. Economic recession does not erase the value of having a central facility that demonstrates in the most authentic and dramatic ways possible the varied parts and processes of this area's historical heritage. Getting acquainted with our past in this way should be a satisfying and rewarding experience for those who take part. It is a project that will have something for just about everybody,

and yet it will not be a hodge-podge. History is often a hodge-podge because we get it in bits and pieces. The museum I envision -- and which has been planned -- will organize its information and materials in a way that not only stirs our curiosity but helps us make sense out of the great variety of past experiences that make up our history and our biography.

And to make the past meaningful to those who view it is a worthy ambition. History -- like memories -- do round out our lives. They actually make it possible for us to be truly human. To work for historical understanding and appreciation is therefore to make a contribution to the arts and humanities -- those activities that enlarge and enrich the emotional and intellectual content of our lives.

In conclusion, I see a reasonable opportunity to enlarge and enrich the Riverfront Development idea by making a Western Heritage Museum an important part of it. And I believe this can be done at a reasonable cost and with the expectation that this community will gain some real and substantial cultural and psychological benefits. Other cities have invested in historical preservation and exhibition, to their benefit. Omaha, I believe, can do the same, but in its own way.



### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - William Anthes

Dr. Anthes has been a professor of economics at The University of Nebraska at Omaha since September, 1969. He has done consultant work and research for the Mid-America Insurance Company, the Midwest Research Institute, The University of Missouri and the City of Kansas City, all in Kansas City; and for the University of Arkansas. In Omaha, he has been a part of the Center for Applied Urban Research and the Small Business Administration at The University of Nebraska at Omaha and has been a consultant for North Omaha Community Development, Inc.

Dr. Anthes has written numerous articles in his field, including a series of fifteen entitled "The American Economy," now running in the Lincoln Star-Journal.



## ECONOMICS, ECONOMISTS AND URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

by William L. Anthes

What is economics? What does an economist do? What do economics and economists have to say regarding urban redevelopment? Can economic principles and concepts be of assistance in answering the many questions related to urban redevelopment? These are just a few of the questions that will be examined in this paper. It might be added that if some new questions regarding urban redevelopment are raised in the minds of the participants, I will consider my task accomplished. To reach concrete decisions is beyond the scope of this paper.

What is economics? What does an economist do? In a formal sense, economics is the study of the allocation of limited resources to unlimited wants. As individuals, as nations, we have wants and needs. The wants or needs that economists are concerned with are physical or material. This is not to say that spiritual, social, and psychological wants are not important. It merely states that these latter wants are the concern of some other field of study. In sum,

economists are concerned with material wants and needs. A basic assumption regarding these wants is that they are unlimited.

These wants are satisfied by combining the three economic resources, land, labor and capital in the production and distribution processes. The production and distribution processes provide for the production and the distribution of goods and services. Because resources are limited, the goods and services forthcoming from the production and distribution process will also be limited.

The task of economics is to allocate or ration the limited goods and services among competing wants and needs. In all economics, whether they are rich or poor, the rationing or allocating function must be performed.

In a less formal sense economics may be looked upon as a study of choices or alternatives. All people realize that choices must be made. We cannot have everything we want. The role of economists and economics is to provide a framework for making the decision. The economist does not tell what should be done, or which alternative should be chosen. The role of the economist is to suggest a framework of methodology for analyzing problems. It is up to individuals or communities or nations to make the final decision as to which alternatives they want.

It is not too difficult to see the application of economic analysis to urban redevelopment questions. There are, without a doubt, many questions and alternatives regarding redevelopment. Before examining the three redevelopment alternatives, I would like to discuss two techniques of analysis or concepts used by economists which are especially relevant. The first concept is that of opportunity

costs. By opportunity costs economists mean the cost or loss of alternatives foregone. There are few, if any, actions or policies that have no alternatives. Everytime we undertake some action, we have to give up or forego an alternative. The opportunity cost of an action or policy is then the loss of the next best alternative.

Is the concept of opportunity cost relevant to the question of urban redevelopment? There is little question but that this concept can play a role in analyzing alternatives. More basic than this, the concept points out the existence of alternatives. All too often actions or policies are presented as being the only alternative. This, we should see, is in error. We are forever faced with alternatives. We must calculate the opportunity costs of our actions and policies.

A second, and closely related, concept is that of benefit-cost analysis. Benefit-cost analysis is a technique use by economists to judge the worthiness of a capital expenditure project. In implementing this technique all costs and all benefits are estimated and a benefit-cost ratio is calculated. If benefits exceed costs the project is deemed worthy. If several projects are possible, they can be ranked from high to low on the basis of their respective benefit-cost ratios.

The next section of the paper will discuss three alternatives regarding redevelopment. The last section will examine several diverse aspects of redevelopment.

### Redevelopment Alternatives

The first redevelopment alternative or decision is to maintain the status quo,

to decide to do nothing. This may be the easiest alternative for many to choose for many see that change can only bring problems. The easiest choice becomes the maintenance of the status quo.

While it may appear to be an easy alternative there are very definite costs. In urban areas, not moving forward means moving backward. If things are not accomplished the situation will likely get worse. Further physical deterioration is likely as more firms move out and as the abandoned buildings are subjected to vandals and the elements. Crime, fires, a growing number of vagrants, and other social problems will increase if nothing positive is done. In sum, the alternative of the maintaining of the status quo is, in reality, a step backward.

Wilbur Thompson, a noted urban economist, has stated in his book, A Preface to Urban Economics, that "no nation is rich enough to throw away a city." I might paraphrase Thompson slightly by saying no city is rich enough to throw away its downtown. We have too much invested in downtown areas to leave them to decline. The downtown area is the city and without it the city will slowly fade.

Thus, it appears that some form of positive action is necessary. Some form of redevelopment effort is necessary. The question then becomes who will fund and support such a redevelopment program. It would appear that two alternative sources of redevelopment efforts exist: the public sector and the private sector. While no definite conclusions will be provided here as to which sector should provide the funds and the impetus for development, we will examine the pros and cons of each sector.

Many Americans have come to see the government as the solution to all of

their problems. For many years the government was looked upon as a non-economic or external force. It was thought that the government that governs best governs least. This type of thinking passed from existence, for the most part when the United States fought its way out of the Depression. With the Depression and World War II the government got into the American economic system and never left. As a result, many Americans today find the answer to economic and other problems by calling upon government.

To the question then, who will provide the funds for redevelopment, many answer the government. But the unfortunate answer is that the government does not have the necessary funds. The Federal government is incurring record deficits currently with little end in sight. Unfortunately, local and state governments are in no better shape. The current situation in New York City is a case in point. Thus, to answer that the government sector can provide the necessary funds is highly suspect.

On the other hand, a government agency of some sort may be required to obtain large parcels of land for redevelopment purposes. All too often redevelopment is stymied because it is not possible to obtain large parcels of land for redevelopment to proceed efficiently. The government sector might provide the best vehicle for acquiring land.

The alternative to a sizable government role is the private sector. By the private sector I mean the business sector. The problem regarding the business sector's taking over such redevelopment efforts is that the business sector is motivated by profits. Many business firms find it difficult to see that profits will be

forthcoming from such actions. Most businesses think that the costs will exceed the benefits. Even if they perceive the benefits to exceed costs, they think that the benefits will be even greater by abandoning the downtown area for suburban areas. But, the private sector is capable of carrying out redevelopment efforts. The efforts by Hallmark in Kansas City seem little short of amazing. Hallmark took a deteriorating area of Kansas City known as "sign-board hill" and turned it into a luxury hotel-shops-office complex. This area, on the fringe of the Kansas City central business district, is a sign of what the private sector can do.

In all probability, the question of who will undertake the task of redevelopment, the private sector or the public sector, will not be an either-or choice. Redevelopment, if it is to occur, will likely come through business-government cooperation.

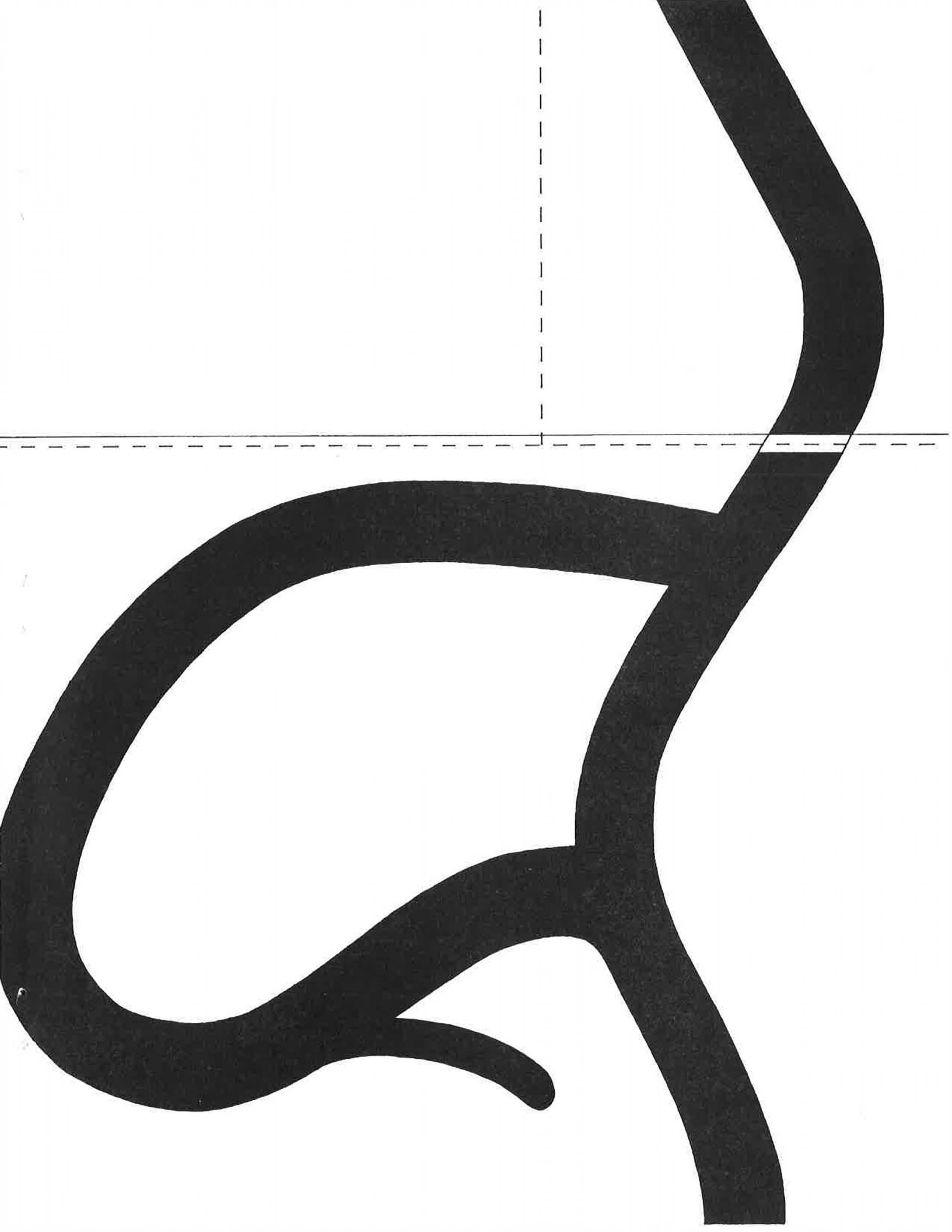
### Some Thoughts on Redevelopment

I have attempted, in the first two sections, to review the role of economics and economists in the redevelopment issue and to study redevelopment alternatives. This last section will examine several wide ranging redevelopment issues.

First, I think we need to reconsider what we mean by redevelopment. Too often redevelopment is considered only in physical terms and nothing broader. The fact is that the physical side of redevelopment may be the easiest. What may be more difficult, but even more important, is a turn-around in people's thinking regarding downtown. This raises a second point, people have too often severed their ties with the downtown area. If they even work there, chances are they do not shop there. Even more unlikely is the probability that they have a

residence there. A current weakness is that people do not have any close ties to downtown. They are there for eight hours and then they head home with no thought of returning until the next day. People do not own things downtown so they feel no pride of ownership. The early Greeks pointed out that everyone's property is no one's property. People have to be given something they can see, enjoy, and appreciate. They need something they can live with and live in such as the Old Market or the River Quay in Kansas City.

Unless such changes are made to reverse the current trends, certain changes will quite likely occur in the downtown area. Downtown's will continue to exist but they will be of a different type. There will be no major flagship department stores. Downtowns are quite likely to become an area of offices and specialty shops. This is not to say that such changes are bad. Maybe we are saying by our own actions that this is what we want. But if we want to alter the course of events, action will have to be taken soon.





### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - Harold Baxter

A native of Manchester, England, Harold Baxter has degrees in Architecture and Regional Planning from Manchester University. He was a member of architectural firms in Manchester before coming to the United States in 1968 to work with Sargent, Webster, Crenshaw and Folley of Syracuse, New York. A year later he went to Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in Washington, D. C. He has been with Lawrence Halprin & Associates since 1972.

Mr. Baxter has worked on major projects in Everett, Washington; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Aspen, Colorado; Pomona, California; Sioux City, Iowa; Charlottesville, Virginia; Greenville, South Carolina; and Hot Springs, Arkansas.

He was the project director for drawing up the Omaha Central Business District plan and for designing the Central Park Mall.

George Nelson, the keynote speaker for these Riverfront Forums, stated when he was here that, in his opinion, Lawrence Halprin & Associates is the best designer of malls in the country; and that the plan for the Omaha mall, being the one with the most open space, is the nicest of all that he has seen.

THE CHANGING NATURE  
OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

by Harold Baxter

In our increasingly urbanized society architects have the challenging opportunity to contribute significantly to the excitement and vitality of our cities. For the 75% of us who inhabit America's metropolitan areas, the physical environment in which we live profoundly influences our "quality of life."

There have been periods, not all in the distant past, when architects' main interests bore little resemblance to the public's needs and aspirations, satisfying instead their own creative egos or the discrete aims of paying clients. This lack of concern with public well-being has contributed to the decay of the urban fabric. In recent years this disintegration and neglect has prompted attempts by groups of citizens and architects alike to join together to rejuvenate our cities for everyone's benefit.

In this context of increasingly complex issues, Lawrence Halprin &

Associates began to develop methods to better involve the constituency we serve in making their own environmental decisions. LH & A initiated a workshop format called "Take Part." Our main objective is consensus problem-solving -- by the people themselves. LH & A's workshop techniques are several-fold: to involve as representative a mix of a community as possible; to establish a common language of awareness to articulate perception; to generate new or more definitive environmental and community awareness; to identify community needs and expectations; to maintain accessibility or visibility of a project underway; and to deal in practical aspects of implementing projects.

Workshops produce growing responsiveness in design which evolves as a unique expression of the community's identified needs and expectations. A special vitality also results. Through participating in the concepts and designs from the outset, citizens are sharing new found commitments to actively continue their involvement in planning the future of their cities and neighborhoods. In this respect citizens' value as resources for planners and designers is growing more important all the time. Architects who work in isolation have sacrificed the richness of this creativity and ideas they might tap. We have found that workshops are as significant for LH & A's designers and planners as they are to insure community involvement in and support for the designs and plans.

Of course, each of us sees a city and our community in our own ways. We choose to live and work in a place because of its amenities or opportunities, though some do not have the luxury of these choices and are victims of the

environment. Environmental consciousness and community identity have been growing as citizens are recognizing both the greater potentials of their cities and the threats to them.

All communities have a variety of resources -- some of which are unrecognized, others of which are not fully utilized. One of the grave tragedies of isolated architects, planners and their clients has been to ignore these resources either as a basis for inspiration or as something to be integrated into new plans.

Old buildings, for instance, have been torn down to make room for urban renewal projects (often never built). They also have been overpowered architecturally as new buildings insensitive to their environments have been built nearby. More recently, however, old buildings have been rediscovered throughout the country, not necessarily for any unique historical significance, but because of their special architectural character or charm.

Recycling old buildings for new uses is a way to capitalize on a resource which has been ignored in the past. Forgotten areas of a city have been revitalized, providing new environments for residents and visitors to explore, developing new senses of community identity and pride, and, quite often, restoring a human scale to a city which has been sacrificed for high-rise, high-density urban developments.

One of the most disturbing modern trends of urbanization has been inadequate utilization and appreciation of the natural features of cities. Natural topography is responsible for the founding and flourishing of many of the settlements

which grew into our great cities and comfortable towns: confluences of rivers, lakes or fertile valleys.

American industrialization and urbanization removed people from the riverfronts, bay and lake shores where they first chose to settle to build their homes and to develop their markets and commerce. We paved over our countrysides as the concentric circles of suburbanization grew out from our cities -- as we sought to escape the unnatural and inhuman environments we had created there. Some of us go to wilderness to renew ourselves and to rekindle the spirit we feel we have lost in our cities.

But the resources which sparked the founding of these cities often is still there, and citizens in some cities are working to improve access to those resources. The people of Omaha, who have recognized the potential of the Missouri River as a resource for the whole city, are among people around the country who are now rediscovering their under-utilized resources. Besides what you are doing here in Omaha, residents of Flint, Michigan, Cleveland, Ohio, and other cities are re-establishing their links to their water and natural heritage by rejuvenating their waterfronts as resources which can benefit everyone. Other communities are creating pedestrian malls and open space networks downtown to bring new life and zest back into our cities.

Take Part Workshops have played an important role in increasing participants' awareness of their communities in order to identify the resources available which have been overlooked or ignored. Workshops are intense, planned activities directed by "scores," or indications for people's activities in time

and place. Each workshop is a new experiment -- clearly the issues plaguing one community are distinct from those troubling another, though similarities exist. Accordingly, LH & A designs scores individually for the special needs and objectives of each community.

We are enthusiastic about Take Part because the spirit of working together is so contagious; because we feel that our job as urban designers is inexorably linked to getting people back to helping to make their own environmental decisions.

In sum, workshops were conceived with several important objectives. To involve people intimately in the planning and design of projects affecting them. To identify public needs developed through increased awareness. To respond to needs, not to dictate foregone conclusions. To make reality of plans and designs.

Workshops are conducted to avoid having people receive word from outside experts. To end win-lose, polarizing confrontations. In short, workshops are designed to return decision-making where it belongs -- to the people.

## REFLECTIONS

We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us.

Winston Churchill

And they said Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

Genesis

Unless all existence is a medium of revelation, no particular revelation is possible.

William Temple

This pursuit of strangeness is not a blasé's search for the bizarre and out-of-the-way. It is the conscious attempt to achieve a new look at the same old world, people, ideas, feelings and things.

William J. J. Gordon

## USED TROUT STREAM FOR SALE MUST BE SEEN TO BE APPRECIATED.

I went inside and looked at some ship's lanterns that were for sale next to the door. Then a salesman came up to me and said in a pleasant voice, "Can I help you?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm curious about the trout stream you have for sale. Can you tell me something about it? How are you selling it?"

"We're selling it by the foot length. You can buy as little as you want or you can buy all we've got left. A man came in here this morning and bought 563 feet. He's going to give it to his niece for a birthday present," the salesman said.

"We're selling the waterfalls separately, of course, and the trees and birds, flowers, grass and ferns we're also selling for extra. The insects we're giving away free with a minimum purchase of ten feet of stream."

"How much are you selling the stream for?" I asked.

"Six dollars and fifty-cents a foot," he said. "That's for the first hundred feet. After that it's five dollars a foot."

"How much are the birds?" I asked.

"Thirty-five cents apiece," he said. "But of course they're used. We can't guarantee anything."

Richard Brautigan

from

Trout Fishing in America